The Metaphor of the Divine as Planter of the People in the Hebrew Bible

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

by

Jennifer Metten Pantoja

2014
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Metaphor of the Divine as Planter of the People in
the Hebrew Bible

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Doctor of Philosophy in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
University of California, Los Angeles, 2014
Professor William M. Schniedewind, Chair

In the Hebrew Bible, the God of ancient Israel, YHWH, is almost always
portrayed metaphorically. He is likened to a warrior, a king, a shepherd, a rock, a bride-
groom, a husband, and a master gardener, to name just a few. This study examines the
emergence of the conceptual metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE in order to
demonstrate that biblical literature portrays the divine/human relationship as a reflection
of the natural environment. Ancient Israel was an agrarian society in which the
association between the land and the religion was intertwined. The aim of this study is to
trace the emergence of this specific metaphorical discourse in ancient Hebrew poetry and
follow its development throughout biblical history, in order to illustrate how the deep
connection to the land shaped ancient thought and belief. Within this broader, primary
metaphor, the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL will also be analyzed
as an image predominant in the pre-exilic prophetic literature. Viticulture became a
powerful icon of the developing nation, providing rich imagery for eighth century prophetic concerns. Finally, this study will investigate how the metaphorical depiction of the people as plants was re-interpreted in exilic and post-exilic literature in response to the Babylonian campaigns in the early sixth century B.C.E., which forced many people out of the land. Recent advances in cognitive linguistics, coupled with traditional historical-critical methods, as well as a survey of the material culture, will illuminate one snapshot of ancient Israel’s conception of the divine.
The dissertation of Jennifer Metten Pantoja is approved.

Ra’anam Boustan
Arnold Band
William M. Schniedewind, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles
2014
I dedicate this dissertation to

Benoni: my true love and partner

And to my children: Micah, Lucas, Justus, and Elyana

You bring endless joy to my world.

I thought I could, I thought I could, I thought I could…
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<td>Biblica et orientalia</td>
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<td>BIS</td>
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<td>CBET</td>
<td>Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
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JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplemental Series

JSRR Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion

MWA Monographs in World Archaeology

NGC New German Critique

NovT Novum Testamentum

NTOA Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus

OBO Orbis biblicus et orientalis

OBT Overtures to Biblical Theology

OCuT Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts

OPS Oxford Psychology Series

OTC Old Testament Commentary

OtSt Oudtestamentische Studiën

OTL Old Testament Library

OTWSA Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suit-Afrika

PEQ Palestine Exploration Quarterly

Proof Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History

PWCJS Proceeding of the World Congress of Jewish Studies

RevQ Revue de Qumran

SBEC Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity

SBLABS Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies

SBLWAW Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World

Semeia Semeia

SemeiaST Semeia Studies

SO Symbolae osloenses

SPHS Scholars Press Homage Series

STDJ Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah

SVTP Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica

TA Tel Aviv
Transeu  Transeuphratène
TZ    Theologische Zeitschrift
UBL   Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
UF    Ugarit-Forschungen
VT    Vetus Testamentum
VTSup Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC   World Biblical Commentary
WCJS  World Congress of Jewish Studies
ZAW   Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZTK   Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche
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in a graduate seminar led by Bill Schniedewind on the book of Exodus. While studying
Exodus 15, divine planting imagery sparked my curiosity. As I pursued this imagery in
the biblical text, I noticed a connection between the nation of Israel and vine imagery,
especially in the prophetic literature. This led to an in-depth study of planting/vine
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Chapter One

Metaphor: A Channel for Divine Communication

1.1 Overview of Argument: God is a Reflection of the Natural Environment

“Who is like you, O YHWH, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonders? Exod 15:11

How did the ancient Israelites glean their understanding of the divine? How was the God of the Hebrew Bible characterized? Passages such as “The Song of the Sea” in Exodus 15 attempt to illuminate the distinct nature of the Israelite God, YHWH, as opposed to other gods within the ancient Near Eastern pantheon. But what made this god distinct and how were these particular qualities conveyed? Was this particular divinity depicted in language exclusive to ancient Israel or was there commonalities shared with neighboring cultures?

The language used to describe the God of the Hebrew Bible has fascinated traditional exegetes and many of their interpretations have influenced modern conceptions of the divine. But, what if some of these explanations do not accurately reflect the depiction of the divine as it pertained to the ancient Israelites? This study examines the conceptual metaphor of the divine as the planter of the people in order to demonstrate that the biblical literature portrays the divine/human relationship as a reflection of the natural environment.

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1 The NRSV translation of the Bible will be used unless otherwise indicated.
2 YHWH is the personal name for the Israelite God in the Hebrew Bible.
Theologians and scholars have long interpreted the God of the Hebrew Bible as multifaceted and complex. These complexities are not mere inventions of scholars, but have their roots in the texts themselves. For example, in the creation account God is portrayed as a gardener, walking among the first humans. These are the same humans who were made in “the image of God” and God’s breath infused life into them. The anthropomorphic elements of the divine such as the ability to walk, breath, and speak are all qualities that mankind shares as well. The Creator of the Universe and the first human creations shared a garden oasis and it was commonplace for the creator and the created to be seen together. God is physically present in this story and has the capability to move about freely, converse, and express emotion.

The revelation at Sinai, however, depicts another dimension of the divine. Here, the divine voice bellowed from the thunder and lightening surrounding the mountain where the ancient Israelites were encamped. According to Exod 33:20, no one can see God and live, yet Moses may have seen his face (Exod 33:11) or possibly just his back (Exod 33:22-23). The text also specifies that Moses, after spending time with God on Mt. Sinai, was glowing from the radiance that emanated from the divine (Exod 34:29-35).

In the city of Jerusalem, the divine presence filled the temple and the Ark of the Covenant was his throne (1 Kgs 8:11). Yet in Ezekiel, the divine presence is depicted leaving his throne, the place where his feet rested (Ezek 10:18-19; 43:1-5). We are told that the prophet Isaiah saw God and was terrified that he was about to die because of the vision. Fortunately, one of the seraphs flew down, took burning coals from the altar, and purified Isaiah’s lips with the coal (Isa 6:1-7). Amos, however, mentions seeing God at the altar and this event did not seem to cause him dismay (Amos 9:1).
Even the name of God has baffled scholars because it could imply various connotations. Peter W. Macky, who wrote one of the first books on the importance of metaphor to the Hebrew Bible, notes that, “when God mentions that ‘I am what I am,’ he emphasizes his mystery and the human inability to grasp his nature intellectually.”

The theologian, Gerhard von Rad, wrestled with the appropriate method to describe an, “invisible deity that transcends all human comprehension.” Exegetes, attempting to describe an “abstract” concept such as the divine, have thus faced a myriad of challenges.

Does the Hebrew Bible actually describe God as an abstract entity, invisible and incomprehensible to all human perception? I would argue to the contrary. The Hebrew Bible never mentions that God is invisible, so how can the divine be characterized as an abstract entity? The portrait of the divine as an abstract, unapproachable, and unknowable character is a product of Western theological thought. The Christian theologian, Augustine of Hippo, and various philosophers of the Middle Ages such as Maimonides, emphasized the “mysterious” or “abstract” nature of the divine and these interpretations have influenced modern notions of divinity. For example, a Christian


6 See Benjamin D. Sommer, The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 104, for a detailed analysis of biblical evidence for God's bodies.

theology developed around the time of Augustine that Griffen and Paulsen argue was, “primarily under the influence of Platonism, a non-anthropomorphic and incorporeal conception of God, that began to dominate all subsequent theology and philosophy.”

Augustine wrote fifteen books on the trinity alone and in particular, on the nature of God. He truly desired to understand the divine, but I agree with James Dittes that the God that Augustine described is characterized by “remoteness, aloofness, absoluteness, impersonality, and unapproachability.”

Jewish philosophers also contributed to the portrayal of the divine as a transcendent and incomparable entity. Benjamin Sommer argues that, “for Maimonides and other medieval Jewish philosophers (starting with Saadia Gaon), the denial of God’s corporeality was a crucial aspect of monotheism.” Maimonides was concerned that a god who could be divided might be interpreted as polytheistic. Therefore, a dichotomy arose between anthropomorphic descriptions of the divine, which can be found in the Talmud and the Midrash, and later interpretations that insisted that the divine was transcendent.

Yochanan Muffs articulated the dichotomy that these exegetes struggled with quite eloquently:

> The tension between the concept of transcendence, which insists the deity is not to be identified with the *physis* of the world, and radical personalism, which insists the deity is anthropomorphically involved in the world, is the very source of the creative dynamism of biblical anthropomorphism.

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I would argue that this tension is what gives the God of the Hebrew Bible a vibrant persona, oscillating between human likeness and intangibility. The Hebrew Bible depicts the divine as anthropomorphically present and unbounded at the same time. However, is God’s infiniteness a dimension of God himself or a product of the editorial traditions surrounding the composition of the Hebrew Bible?

Benjamin D. Sommer argues that not only does the Hebrew God have a corporeal body, but that he in fact has more than one body, in his seminal work *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*. Sommer illustrates instances of divine embodiment in the Hebrew Bible to show that, “God’s person finds expression in more than one self, even as the underlying unit of the being called YHWH endures.” Therefore, God can be in human form speaking with Abraham or embodied in a stone that Jacob slept on at Bethel. He labels this tradition the “fluidity model” and ties these occurrences to the Yahwist and Elohist editorial branches.

Some editors of the Pentateuch, however, namely the Priestly and Deuteronomistic traditions, rejected the fluidity model and insisted that God had only one body and one self. Therefore, God himself is contained in the temple (P tradition) or God is in heaven and his symbol, i.e., his name (יהוה) is in the temple (Dtr. Tradition), but he cannot be in multiple locations at one time. The dichotomy that Muffs emphasized, therefore, is a product of the Scriptures themselves. There are traces of the fluidity

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13 Ibid., 124.

14 See, for example, G. Ernest Wright, “God Amidst His People: The Story of the Temple,” in *The Rule of God: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), 70ff., for more information on Name Theology. Also, Sommer, *Bodies of God*, 62-68, for a comparison of the name of God as a symbol for placing ownership over a place.
model in various places in the biblical books, but because major sections of the Hebrew Bible were edited by the Priestly and Deuteronomistic traditions, the fluidity model is harder to recognize. Therefore, Sommers separates the depictions of the divine into two categories: “one of the structures in question presents God as locatable, knowable, and usable. The other reckons the divine to be uncanny, unheimlich, in every sense of the words: unknowable, unhomely (i.e., unattachable to any home), dangerous.”  

The fluidity model acts as a bridge, enabling God to be both present and divine at the same time. God’s unique qualities are not diminished in any way by being accessible. He can maintain his transcendence, yet establish human connection as well.

The fluidity model is important to this study because this same paradigm is apparent in the metaphors the biblical text uses to describe the relationship between the divine and his people, the ancient Israelites. The biblical writers understood the complexities associated with describing the divine, but more often than not, metaphor is their primary vehicle of expression. For example, the prophets were summoned to utter the very words of the LORD (יְהוָה) to a wayward people, often detailing the emotive nature of “YHWH Most High.” The Hebrew Bible highlights only a handful of actual divine interactions with a human being. Outside of these few instances, metaphor is the primary method for divine communication used by the biblical authors. Through metaphor, YHWH became intimately involved in the everyday, the fertility of the fields or the success of the vineyard. The conceptual world was readily understandable by the people, rather than a select few. According to E. K. Holt, “the Old Testament God is not a monolith but a many-sided crystal, and thus he can be a god that changes. He can be

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15 Sommer, Bodies of God, 122.
the prosecutor as well as the judge, the jealous husband as well as the forgiving father.”

The many-sided crystal through which the divine is refracted is almost always depicted metaphorically in the biblical text. This fact is often overlooked by the casual reader.

Ancient Hebrew poetry best captures the earliest depictions and essential elements of YHWH and serves as a basis for the emergence of various metaphors throughout the biblical text. For example, the deity is portrayed metaphorically as a warrior, a storm-god, a shepherd, a planter, a rock, a fortress, a shield, and a creator in just three early biblical poems: Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32 and 2 Samuel 22. Personifying metaphors for God such as shepherd, warrior, creator, and planter are challenged by metaphors taken from nature such as rock, shield, or fortress and even zoomorphic images such as a lion. Poetic language, and metaphor in particular, does not describe how things literally are, but rather what things are like. Therefore, with the help of metaphors, God develops a complex interior personality.

The early songs and poems that can be found sprinkled throughout biblical literature are often a mirror of the natural world of the writers. According to the conceptual linguist Zoltán Kövecses, “most poetic language is based on conventional, ordinary conceptual metaphors.” He also notes that the physical world is a natural foundation for more abstract domains. Therefore, just as the “natural and physical

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environment shapes a language, primarily its vocabulary, in an obvious way; consequently, it will shape the metaphors as well.\textsuperscript{20} George Lakoff and Mark Turner, the leading two figures in conceptual metaphor studies, recognized that metaphor is frequently employed in everyday speech. They also noticed that poets are the ones who purposefully use this tool to “illuminate our experience, explore the consequences of our beliefs, challenge the way we think, and criticize our ideologies.”\textsuperscript{21} Poetic metaphor allows a rare glimpse into the particular worldview of a society and can be a useful resource when studying poetry from ancient texts such as the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{22}

Illustrations from the plant world are among the most common metaphorical fields utilized in biblical literature.\textsuperscript{23} Horticultural imagery is used frequently because the progression of a seed to a blossoming plant is an ecological process associated with everyday knowledge, particularly in predominantly agrarian societies such as ancient Israel. Vivid imagery as well as specific metaphors were employed to not only illuminate a particular message, but also as a means to convey deeper theological concepts within

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 187.


\textsuperscript{22} One of the main reasons Lakoff and Turner wrote their field guide to poetic metaphor was to show that poetic metaphor is powerful and should be included in the “domain of reason.” They argue that poets have a unique ability to use everyday thought and illuminate those thoughts through, “the extension, composition, and criticism of the basic metaphorical tools through which we comprehend much of reality” Lakoff and Turner, More than Cool Reason, 115. Much of the metaphorical poetry in the Bible is also drawn from these basic metaphorical tools. See Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry (2nd ed.; New York: Basic Books, 2011), for an introduction to biblical poetry. Also, James L. Kugel, The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), for an alternate approach to the study of biblical poetry.

\textsuperscript{23} According to Meir Weiss, there are about 250 images of the plant world found in the biblical text. See Meir Weiss, The Bible From Within: The Method of Total Interpretation (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1984), 135.
the language of their own agrarian and pastoral environment. Since the God of ancient Israel is almost always portrayed metaphorically, Walter Brueggeman rightly observed that, “he is continually and closely linked to the dailyness of Israel’s life.”

1.2 The Scope of this Study: Metaphor as a Window into Ancient Thought

Philosophers’ mistrust of metaphor as “ornamental” has been transformed by the emerging field of cognitive linguistics and has opened up new lines of inquiry for scholars from both scientific and religious specialties. Furthermore, scholars are presently more aware of the profuse use of metaphorical language in the biblical text. Northrop Frye argues in *The Great Code*, “that we have to consider the possibility that metaphor is, not an incidental ornament of Biblical language, but one of its controlling modes of thought.” If metaphor truly is one of the controlling modes of biblical thought, then the examination of the development of one particular metaphor throughout the biblical text, should shed light on various aspects of ancient Israelite life and society.

The goal of this study is to examine the diachronic development of one particular metaphor for the divine using advances in cognitive linguistics and traditional historical-

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critical methods as well as a survey of the material culture, to provide a snapshot of the ancient Israelites’ conception of the divine.  

This inquiry takes as its focus the image of YHWH as a master gardener, but even more specifically, the conceptual metaphor: YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE.  

The creation account portrays the divine physically “planting” a lush garden for the first inhabitants of the earth. However, the depiction of YHWH as the planter of the people is a metaphorical concept that can be found throughout the biblical literature as well as the works of early Judaism. The emergence of this metaphor in ancient Hebrew poetry and its development throughout biblical history will facilitate the structuring of this study. Within this broader, primary metaphor, the complex metaphor: YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL will also be analyzed as an image predominant in the pre-exilic prophetic literature. This study will also examine how this particular metaphor was re-interpreted.

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27 Carol A. Newsom wrote an article, “A Maker of Metaphors: Ezekiel’s Oracle Against Tyre,” *Int* 38 (1984): 151–64, which analyzed Ezekiel's oracles against Tyre, using both a literary analysis as well as a traditional exegetical approach. She states on pg. 164 that, “while an analysis of the rhetoric of metaphor does not replace traditional historical-critical method, the study of literary technique and its effect on meaning can both challenge the results of those investigations and produce new insights into the material.” The goal of this study is to examine one particular metaphor for the divine from a historical and literary perspective, as well as noting what is known about the material culture. I too believe that this approach can produce new insights into not only the origin of the metaphor, but also how the metaphor evolves throughout early Jewish history.

28 Small capital letters are used when referring to metaphorical concepts. In a conceptual metaphor, there are source domains (the conceptual domains from which the metaphorical expressions are drawn from) and target domains (the conceptual domains for whom these expressions are intended). See Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 4–8. For the purposes of this study, YHWH’S relationship with the people is the target domain and plant imagery is the source domain.

29 According to Ning Yu, “Cognitive semantics maintains that our minds are embodied in such a way that our conceptual systems draw largely upon the peculiarities of our bodies and the specifics of our physical and cultural environments… Primary metaphors derive directly from our experience and very often from our common bodily experience and therefore are more likely to be universal, whereas complex metaphors are combinations of primary metaphors and cultural beliefs and assumptions and, for that reason, tend to be culture-specific.” Ning Yu, “Metaphor from Body and Culture,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 247-48. For further information on these classifications, see Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Also, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
in post-exilic literature in response to the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.E., which uprooted key portions of the population from the land for a period of time.\textsuperscript{30}

The core research questions for this study are: Why is metaphor a dominant mode of expression in the Hebrew Bible, especially when comparing the relationship between the divine and the people? How does metaphor contribute to God’s accessibility? Why is the supreme deity of the nation of Israel depicted as the planter, but more particularly, as the vintner of the people, his choice vine? Can this image be found in other ancient Near Eastern religious traditions? And if so, is it used there in similar ways? Why is the metaphor: YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL primarily a pre-exilic concept? And how did this metaphorical discourse offer a glimpse into the social, material, and religious world of the ancient Israelites? Furthermore, how did the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and subsequent exile of the people from the land alter the depiction of YHWH as a vintner? Finally, why does garden imagery reminiscent of Eden replace the vine metaphor and become the predominant plant metaphorical discourse of the post-exilic period?

The biblical text does not completely reveal the divine; he is seen by some, but not by others. And even though he appears to have a body of some sort, it may not be made of the same substance as human flesh. Paul Ricœur’s hermeneutical theory of metaphor has been instrumental in discussing some of the intangible aspects of the divine. He argues that metaphor is an ideal means to communicate what he terms “the symbol.” Symbols are defined as “any structure of signification in which a direct,

\textsuperscript{30} 586 B.C.E. is the generally accepted date for the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. See Abraham Malamat, \textit{Israel in Biblical Times} (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983), 243-47, for a discussion of the arguments surrounding this date.
primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.”

According to the biblical text, the divine was not revealed literally to many people, so the “symbol” of the divine is conjugated metaphorically in the language of the biblical texts to provide various snapshots of divinity. Utilizing Ricœur’s hermeneutical theory, the various metaphors for YHWH also have the “ability to engender a conceptual diversity, an unlimited number of potential interpretations at a conceptual level.” In this way, metaphor became a vehicle of interpretation for biblical thought.

The metaphor of the divine as a planter of the people is only one of many metaphorical expressions for YHWH, yet this metaphor remains a consistent characterization of the relationship between the Hebrew people and their god. It is depicted in the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15), it is tied to the state in the Promise to David (2 Samuel 7), and the pre-exilic prophets utilize this metaphor to contrast divine favor as a flourishing vineyard, versus divine wrath as sour grapes. The exiled priest, Ezekiel, also draws upon the biblical portrayal of YHWH as the planter of the people when he envisions a new Israel. In this Israel, the people are to be planted by God for all eternity.

Post-biblical authors also noticed this metaphorical concept and utilized it in their writings. This particular metaphor remains a consistent motif in biblical and post-biblical Jewish literature. Therefore, the tracing of its origin and subsequent depictions throughout these texts should prove to be both interesting and illuminating.

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Because the divine is typically displayed metaphorically in biblical literature, metaphor studies can help to illuminate why particular metaphors are chosen. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, “metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness.”

I propose that the metaphor of the divine planting can be attested to several ancient Near Eastern sources, yet the metaphor of the divine as vintner is more applicable to ancient Israel because of the society’s interest in viticulture.

Ancient Israel was an agrarian culture. The people depended on the land for their sustenance and they relied on their god for rain and protection from drought. However, this dependence on the soil did not distinguish the ancient Israelites from their neighbors. The ideal topography and climate for wine production in their territory is one of the factors that separated them from other cultures, namely Egypt (Deut 11:10-15). The exodus and wilderness wanderings are a stark contrast to the images of the Promised Land: milk, honey and bushels of grapes (Num 13:27). The archaeological evidence supports this picture of ancient Israel, especially in reference to the vineyard.

The agrarian context of ancient Israel is vital to understanding not only this metaphor, but also why it evolved with the history of the people. According to linguist Sir John Lyons, “language-behavior is a culture-dependent activity.” Therefore, as the culture changes it is expected that the language will reflect those changes. The exile (586 B.C.E.) provides an ideal opportunity to examine the changes in the metaphorical idiom. I will argue that the connection to the physical land and to viticulture in particular was

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33 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 193.

displaced due to the forced migration of the people from their homeland. It may be surprising that a metaphor so rooted in the land of Israel would remain an established image in post-exilic texts, including Second Temple Jewish literature. Yet, the literature portrays a rich metaphorical discourse on the divine as planter of the people, even by sectarian groups removed from the Jerusalem Temple. YHWH is still the planter, but the people do not include all of Israel. Instead, the chosen people are a more delineated group of people than is found in earlier biblical texts.

Furthermore, the emphasis on viticulture is less predominant after the exile. This, I will argue, is to be expected considering the significant decline in viticulture production. In place of vine imagery, the Garden of Eden is often evoked as the ideal place of planting and there is an eschatological aspect to the length of the planting. The metaphor is reworked to resemble the religious culture of the time and therefore it remains a prominent theme in early Judaism.

1.3 Recent Scholarship on the Metaphor: YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE

To date, no one has attempted to provide a metaphorical analysis of this particular image of God as portrayed in the biblical texts. There have been some studies on the concept of “metaphor” in the Hebrew Bible, especially since the 1970s when literary criticism began to be applied to biblical studies more regularly, but only a few scholars have produced works on specific metaphors for God.35 Marc Zvi Brettler analyzed the

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metaphor of God as king, Horejs Kowalski discussed the metaphorical concept of God as rock, and Brent A. Strawn wrote on the association of God with the lion.\(^{36}\) Marjo Korpel’s monographic study analyzed several metaphors for the divine, and therefore is not limited to just one image in particular.\(^{37}\) Tikva Frymer-Kensky published an article in 2006 on “The Planting of Man” which situated the metaphor MAN IS PLANT in its ancient Near Eastern context.\(^{38}\) In this way, she was able to show how this image may have been borrowed from a broader cultural base and was not novel to ancient Israel. Her article is fundamental to understanding the metaphorical mapping between images from the plant world and mankind for a culture dependent on agriculture. Additionally, Carey Ellen Walsh published her dissertation on viticulture in ancient Israel in 2000.\(^{39}\) This book is useful for illuminating not only the importance of viticulture and horticulture within Israel, but also in the broader ancient Near Eastern landscape.

Typically, studies on metaphor are concentrated on specific books of the Bible or even various passages within a particular book. For example, Isaiah 5, the Song of the Vineyard, clearly portrays the metaphor: YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL. Several

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articles have been written on this passage as well as Isa 27:2-6 and Jer 2:21, which portray allusions to this song, but their arguments have been primarily concerned with the genre and setting of the song rather than with the formation of the metaphor over the course of the biblical tradition.\footnote{Even though this song is a unified literary unit, it is a complex song and so there is little scholarly consensus regarding issues such as genre and etymology of various words. See John D. W. Watts, \textit{Isaiah 1-33 Revised} (Waco: Word Books, 2005), 81-2, for a complete bibliography on the Song of the Vineyard. John T. Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” \textit{JBL} 96 (1977): 337-62, lists twelve possible genres for the song. See especially, R. W. L. Moberly, “Whose Justice? Which Righteousness? The Interpretation of Isaiah V 16,” \textit{VT} 51 (2001): 55-68. The Song of the Vineyard as a “juridical parable” has found recent support among scholars. See Watts, \textit{Isaiah 1-33 Revised}, 84, for a list of these scholars and those who do not agree with the consensus.} Furthermore, much of biblical scholarship on metaphor the last thirty years been rooted in the premise that since God cannot be understood directly, we can only speak of him indirectly through literary constructs such as metaphor.\footnote{See, for example, Macky, \textit{Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought}, 188. Macky argues that metaphor is prominent in the biblical text because God because is mysterious. Korpel also discusses the importance of metaphor as a vehicle for interpreting an “invisible” god. See Korpel, \textit{Rift in the Clouds}, 619.} The goal of this study is to prove the contrary, namely that conceptual metaphor highlights the presence of the divine within the ecological environment of the ancient Israelites.

Job Y. Jindo recently published a book focused on biblical metaphor in Jeremiah 1-24.\footnote{Jindo, \textit{Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered}.} His study outlines a specific style of methodological survey, a text-oriented approach, which examines a variety of metaphors within a biblical text. Jindo devotes part of a chapter to the metaphor: \textit{THE LAND OF ISRAEL IS YHWH’S ROYAL GARDEN}.\footnote{Ibid.,161-85.} The focus of his study is on Jeremiah 1-24, but he does mention Exodus 15 and several other prophetic texts as a point of reference for his argument. My focus on a specific
metaphor pertaining to God and his people would be a metaphor-oriented pattern, but his study is a useful resource.

I believe the present state of scholarship provides an ideal opportunity to examine this topic in greater detail. Research on the metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL is fragmented and has largely been done on a micro-level. Furthermore, scholars who study the Hebrew Bible, Ancient Judaism, early Christianity, and even Rabbinic Judaism, will benefit from this research. We live in a society where the connection to the arable soil is diminishing as large corporations control much of the agricultural production.

Ancient Israel was an agrarian society in which the relationship between the land and the religion was intertwined. Furthermore, the fertility of the land as a marker for divine favor is almost incomprehensible to modern society. Ronald A. Simkins recent study on the importance of nature to Israel’s worldview illustrated that, “biblical scholars have too readily dismissed the natural world from being a significant factor in the development of Israel’s religion and culture.”

The aim of this study is to trace one specific metaphorical discourse throughout biblical literature and ancient Judaism in order to perhaps provide a more detailed understanding of how the deep connection to the land shaped ancient thought and belief.

1.4 Outline of the Chapters of the Dissertation

Chapter two will discuss the emerging field of cognitive metaphor theory and how breakthroughs in this field over the last few decades have proven useful for biblical

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44 See Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 2. Chapter five will discuss the reasons for this dismissal; namely, an attempt to show the superiority of biblical religion over “pagan” religion.
studies. Metaphor theory has had a tumultuous relationship with philosophy beginning with a misinterpretation of Aristotle’s position on metaphor, so attention will be given to the key contributors to this discussion. This chapter will also introduce the importance of cognitive linguistics in evaluating metaphor. Cognitive linguistics is a relatively young field, which emerged in the 1970s. Job Y. Jindo eloquently categorizes this emerging field as, “a new philological approach for investigating the relationship between language, culture, and cognition in antiquity.”\(^{45}\) A cognitive linguistic approach presupposes an investigation of the conceptual world of a given text or metaphorical expression because the worldview of any culture will ultimately be reflected in the language. Therefore, analysis of the conceptual framework behind the metaphor **YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL** is critical to understanding the metaphor as a whole as well as the subsequent offshoots of the metaphor (i.e., **YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL**). Finally, this chapter will delineate the relevant terminology and methodology pertinent to this study.

Chapter three will examine several poems within biblical literature that are typically dated “early” based on content and syntax. Many metaphors for the divine appear to be consistent in these early poems, in particular, the divine as a warrior/storm-god. Special emphasis will be given to the storm-god since this was the deity responsible for agricultural production in most ancient Near Eastern cultures. Chapter two will also examine the foundational text for this study, the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-18). Allusions to the song can be found throughout the Hebrew Bible because it served as a source of identity to a group of tribes aiming to unite under a shared faith. This is a song

of commemoration, but more importantly, it served as a “collective memory” of a merging nation. The memory of a society is delineated at a group level and establishes the identity of that specific group. In this way, Aleida Assman argues that, “cultures create a contract between the living, the dead, and the not yet living. They do not have to start anew in every generation because they are standing on the shoulders of giants whose knowledge they can reuse and reinterpret.” Thus, the younger generation is taught the memories of the older generation, but often some of those traditions are reworked to coalesce with the ideals of the current generation. I will argue in this chapter that this song, and in particular the image of God as a planter of the people, served as one of the earliest memories of ancient Israel.

Chapter four will investigate traces of the metaphor of the divine as a planter within ancient Near Eastern sources. Interestingly, depicting the divine metaphorically was commonplace throughout the ancient Near East and there are many gods depicted as planters of crops as well as planters of people. This chapter will also evaluate how these

46 Memory studies is a relatively nascent field, blossoming only within the last thirty years as scholars transitioned from strictly representing the past through a historical lens to a more social perspective on memory. Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist, was the first person to write about “collective memory” in his Social Frameworks of Memory (Les cadres sociaux de la memoire) in 1925. Halbwachs was a student of Emile Durkheim and rejected Freudian notions that the “individual’s unconscious acts as a repository for all past experiences,” Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practice,” Annu. Rev. of Sociol 24 (1998): 109. He was able to define memory using Durkheim’s theory of collective representation while rejecting the notion of memory found in individual psychology. Halbwachs maintained that it was impossible for individuals to remember outside of the group context. “Memories are not preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled by me externally, and the groups of which I am a part of at any time give the means to reconstruct them…” Maurice Halbwachs, The Collective Memory (trans. F. J. Ditter, Jr. and V. Y. Ditter; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), 38. Halbwachs drew on Durkheim’s argument that the collective memories of a group became a source of social strength. According to Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, “his research transferred our understanding of memory from a biological framework into a cultural one and opened the doors for his theory of ‘cultural memory,’ a collective concept.” Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” NGC 64 (1995): 125.

cultures may have influenced ancient Israelite depictions of YHWH, in particular, YHWH as a planter. Until the last few decades, biblical scholarship was more preoccupied with highlighting the “novelties” of biblical religion rather than acknowledging the continuities apparent in the cultural milieu. A comparative analysis of the planting metaphor will illuminate the affinities as well as the novelties of this image within the ancient Near East.

Chapter five will situate the conceptual metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL in ancient Israel’s agricultural environment. Viticulture is the product of a stable, settled community as it takes years to cultivate and glean vines for wine production. The climate of Israel was also favorable for vine production. The archaeological material is extensive and reveals that viticulture was an important part of every day life in ancient Israel, whereas beer was the drink of choice in the majority of other ancient Near Eastern cities. Furthermore, water was scarce and often contaminated which made wine important for daily sustenance. According to Carey Ellen Walsh, “vineyards demanded labor, care, even love, and brought a measure of economic stability, along with joy, relaxation, and celebration…It offered too a rich source of imagery for the biblical


49 Cf. Walsh, Fruit of the Vine, 18.

50 According to Walsh, “epigraphic evidence includes the Gezer calendar of the agricultural year, the Samaria ostraca, and the lmlk jar handles from throughout Judah. These, along with archaeological evidence of presses, wine jugs, jar stoppers, strainers, storage facilities, and paleobotanical finds as various sites, yield a picture of significant wine production in ancient Israel.” Walsh, Fruit of the Vine, 7). Egypt and Mesopotamia do not have the climate necessary for large-scale wine production. See Victor H. Matthews, “Treading the Winepress: Actual and Metaphorical Viticulture in the Ancient Near East,” Semeia 86 (1999): 21, for more information on the production of beer as a staple drink in ancient Mesopotamia. See also, Oded Borowski, Agriculture in Iron Age Israel (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), for a broader study of the agrarian environment in ancient Israel.
writers to exploit for their theological and other ideological agendas.”\textsuperscript{51} The process involved in wine making would have been familiar in ancient Israelite society, especially in the Iron Age, and so it should not be surprising that this imagery is called upon to illuminate the intricate relationship between God and the people.

Chapter six will discuss the role of this metaphor in biblical literature, with a special emphasis on Isaiah 5 (The Song of the Vineyard) as well as the writings of other eighth century prophets. The frequent use of a vineyard as a metaphor and specifically as a metaphor depicting the Israelites in the pre-exilic prophetic texts, speaks to a specific set of inferences regarding fertility and harvest. Vine imagery in often associated with abundance and the harvest season was a time to enjoy the fruit of the labor. There was an expectation of high productivity, yet God’s vineyard, which is the people of Israel, produced sour grapes instead of lush grapes.\textsuperscript{52} Even though the people were pledged to YHWH and were considered his choice vine, the prophets chastised them for sequestering land from the poor and worshipping other gods. Many of these passages depict the disillusionment of the vintner: how could such a carefully tended vine not yield the expected harvest? This chapter will also explore the moral component behind the image of the grapes as a harvest of righteousness. The theme of a “planting of righteousness” becomes an important concept in post-exilic texts.

Chapter seven will examine the impact of the Babylonian exile on the metaphor of the deity as vintner. The uprooting of the people and subsequent exile was a defining moment in the social history of the Jewish people. This was a dark period for biblical

\textsuperscript{51} Walsh, \textit{Fruit of the Vine}, 250.

literature and much of the writings are either lamentations or visions of a future restoration for the people. Several of the post-exilic texts are also eschatological in nature and depict the re-birth of a specific “remnant” of people returning from exile (Isa 60:20-21). Creation imagery as well as several references to a “re-planting” are likened to the Garden of Eden (Ezek 36:35-36; Isa 51:3). Isaiah 27 is especially noteworthy because images of YHWH slaying the serpent in the sea and the Song of the Vineyard are combined to form a picture of a future Israel. The exile and its aftermath raised many questions regarding the identity of a people who had taken great comfort in knowing that they were the planting of a dedicated and loyal vintner. One of the goals of this chapter is to illuminate the disillusionment of the uprooting as well as how the planting metaphor was reinterpreted for the remnant that returned to the land.

Chapter seven will also investigate how mythic material such as the divine combat myth (Exodus 15), re-emerge as a motif in connection with the restored community. Isaiah 51 illustrates the combination of the old ritual pattern with

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53 The textualization of the Hebrew Bible was a complex process, which we may never fully decipher. The Persian and Hellenistic periods are often argued as the time frame when this literature was written down. The structuring and ordering of the canon was a product of these time periods, but many of the texts were likely composed much earlier. The eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. provide a more ideal framework for the compilation of the oral tradition as well as a written history of the monarchy. For a detailed analysis of why the eighth and seventh centuries were the most favorable environment for the textualization of the pre-exilic corpus see, William M. Schniedewind, How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 64-118. Baruch Halpern and Sare Japhet are two scholars who argue for a Persian and Hellenistic dating. Cf. Baruch Halpern, “Erasing History: The Minimalist Assault on Ancient Israel,” BRev 11 (1995): 27–35, 47. Sara Japhet, “In Search of Ancient Israel: Revisionism at All Costs,” in The Jewish Past Revisited (ed. D. N. Myers and D. B. Ruderman; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 212–33.


eschatological events pertaining to a future other-worldly Jerusalem. The representation of YHWH as a storm-god warrior, intimately involved in the affairs of the people, remains a persistent motif even in post-exilic literature.

Chapter eight will provide a synthesis and conclusion on the significance of the metaphor YAHWEH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL. This metaphor has a long literary tradition that is based on early descriptions of the divine as the planter of the people, the Song of the Sea being one of the earliest known images. As a foundational myth for the ancient Israelites, several metaphors for the divine emerge from this song. This study encapsulates the planting metaphor beginning with the Song of the Sea and throughout biblical literature. Many key texts from the Second Temple period are also included in this survey (see Excursus 1 and 2). The scope of this study does not include the use of this metaphor in early Christian Literature (i.e., Jesus as the true vine in John 15:1-8)\textsuperscript{56} or even rabbinic mashal. But rather, the focus is on the evolution of the metaphor within biblical literature. This chapter will also illuminate possible future research opportunities on this significant metaphor in Christian and Rabbinic sources.

Chapter Two

Metaphor Theory: A Useful Tool for Biblical Studies

2.1 Introduction

The category of metaphor has had a long and often tumultuous history within the philosophical world. Mark Johnson argued that without metaphor, there would be no philosophy since “the history of western philosophy has been one long development of the objectivist dismissal of metaphor, punctuated rarely by bold declarations of the pervasiveness of metaphor in thought.”\(^{57}\) This debate has two opposing sides: those who maintain that our abstract concepts are defined by metaphor and those who view metaphor as a form of ornamentation with little cognitive value.\(^{58}\) The latter view has been the predominant position for the majority of the last two thousand years, which is noteworthy considering some of the first writings on “metaphor,” initiated this dichotomy.

This chapter will provide a methodological basis for the cognitive importance of metaphor. A brief history of metaphor theory since Aristotle will highlight the frequent categorization of the trope as an embellishment, useful only for poetic decoration. In the last thirty years, however, cognitive linguists transformed metaphor’s reputation by

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\(^{57}\) Mark Johnson, “Philosophy’s Debt to Metaphor,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (ed. R. W. Gibbs, Jr.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 39. Johnson argues that, “according to objectivist metaphysics and theory of knowledge, the world consists of objects, properties, and relations that exist in themselves, independent of human conceptual systems and human agency…Therefore, there cannot be a significant role for metaphor in this picture of mind and world because the cognitive content of a metaphor would need to be reducible to some set of literal concepts or prepositions, if it is to have any meaning and play a role in truth claims. If conceptual metaphor is essential for abstract thought, then the classic objectivist/literalist picture cannot be correct,” Ibid., 45.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 39.
insisting that metaphor has cognitive value. Linguists Lynne Cameron and Graham Low argue that, “metaphor in one form or another is absolutely fundamental to the way language systems develop over time and are structured, as well as to the way human beings consolidate and extend their ideas about themselves, their relationships and their knowledge of the world.”

Thus, metaphor can be a useful tool for studying societal development, ancient societies in particular.

The recent cognitive movement within metaphor theory has influenced biblical studies as well. This chapter will highlight how advances in cognitive linguistics have aided research inquiry into the worldview of ancient Israel. The mapping of conceptual metaphors depicted in the Hebrew Bible can work in tandem with archaeological endeavors and comparative literary analysis to provide another method of interpretation. Even though metaphorical discourse has had a turbulent literary history, the present era is an ideal time to discuss its analytical significance.

2.2 A Brief History of Metaphor in Figurative Thought

The ancient Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, were among the first to reference and give descriptions of this trope. The word “metaphor” comes from the Greek *metapherein*, which means to carry over, transfer. Plato (429-347 B.C.E.) does not give a specific definition of metaphor, yet according to V. R. L. Sage, his dialogues abound in “examples and ideas about the significance of metaphor and figurative

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language which have proved enormously influential.”

Plato presents a dual line of thinking about metaphor: one being that all language originated in metaphor and the other purporting that language is unstable and untrustworthy because “it can never identify absolutely with what it seeks to picture.” The dichotomy that language has two forms, true and false, stems from the teachings of Socrates and greatly influenced the dualistic philosophy that Plato emanates in his writings regarding the role of metaphor in literature.

The writings of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) portray a more concrete view of metaphor than is found in the dialogues of Plato. Aristotle saw metaphor on the one hand as a simple replacement, and on the other hand, as a sign of genius.

But the greatest thing, by far, is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity of dissimilars. Through resemblance, metaphor makes things clearer.

Eva Kittay contends that, “Aristotle had already pointed out the cognitive importance of metaphor, particularly metaphor based on analogy,” by making this statement. Metaphor, she argues, has the ability to provide us with a “way of learning something new about the world, or about how the world may be perceived and understood.”

Aristotle also highlighted some of the rhetorical benefits of metaphor in *The Art of

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61 Ibid., 2457.


64 Ibid., 3.
Rhetoric, such as the ability to ornament a subject or to produce vividness.\textsuperscript{65} Thus, a schism arose between figurative and literal language, which supported the use of literal language as more noble than the figurative use of language.\textsuperscript{66}

Mark Johnson, a leader in the transformation of metaphor studies in the last thirty years, claims that Aristotle’s notions of the function of metaphor and its relationship with a simile has been misinterpreted for two millennia. According to Johnson, philosophers have perpetuated the belief that, “a metaphor is an elliptical simile useful for stylistic, rhetorical, and didactic purposes, but which can be translated into a literal paraphrase without any loss of cognitive content.”\textsuperscript{67} The roots of metaphoric language depicted as a figurative use of speech, and in particular, a predominant form of ornamentation, can be traced to the ancient Greek literature even though this may not have been Aristotle’s original intent for metaphoric language.

The Roman philosopher, Cicero (106-43 B.C.E.) and the first century C.E. Roman rhetorician, Quintilian, both saw metaphor as a sub-par expression of comparison. Therefore, V. R. L. Sage claims that the development from “fifth-century Greek to Augustan Rome seems to be that of a progressive pragmatism. Aristotle always took an empirical approach, but he believed rhetoric to be an art of the possible whereas for

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\textsuperscript{66} According to David H. Aaron, “figurative is a general designation for nonliteral speech acts including many standard rhetorical devices such as irony, sarcasm and cynicism, allegory, hyperbole, metonymy, and of course metaphor. Each of these requires us, as interpreters, to recognize that the literal meaning of an expression is not identical to what the speaker intends us to understand.” Therefore, there is a level of ambiguity in metaphor which gave rise to literal language as clearer and thus, more noble than figurative language. David H. Aaron, \textit{Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery} (BRLAJ 4; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1.

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Quintilian it is a set of exercises to commit to memory. These Greek and Roman philosophers placed metaphor as a figure of speech rather than a figure of thought. This led to other rhetoricians viewing metaphor as a lower level of persuasive speech. Also, they concentrated their inquiry on the metaphor of individual words rather than metaphorical phrases or sentences.

The Middle Ages perpetuated the distrust of figurative language bred by its predecessors, although there were a few philosophers who saw metaphor in a more positive light. For example, the Italian priest and theologian, Aquinas (1225-1274), noticed the abundance of metaphors in the Bible. He argued that Scripture makes use of metaphors as both necessary and useful. The Jewish exegete, Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) also expressed a more positive conception of metaphor. According to Mordechai Cohen, Ibn Ezra differed from Moses Maimonides because Maimonides saw a distinct clarification between figurative language and literal truth (haiqa), whereas Ibn Ezra was able to envision a greater potential for metaphor. Many medieval theologians, however, were opposed to the embellishment of language. Mark Johnson maintains that this opposition arose out of “the monastic emphasis on the inward and spiritual over the

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68 Sage, “Metaphor in Literature,” 2456.


outward and physical." In this way, the literal truth was prized over embellishment and metaphor was categorized with the latter.

Even in the early twentieth century, when logical positivism emerged, metaphor continued to be disregarded as a useful method for interpretation. Andrea Weiss, who has written on figurative language in the Bible, summarizes metaphor theory in the early twentieth century as follows: “metaphor was considered unimportant, deviant, and vague, and an appropriate tool for politicians or poets, but not for scientists attempting to accurately describe physical reality.”

It was not until I. A. Richards’s published *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Max Black published *Models and Metaphor*, that scholars began to view metaphor as a conceptual tool for meaning. According to Andrew Ortony, the new philosophical perspective, relativism, was instrumental in this change of perspective. According to relativism:

> Cognition is the result of mental construction. Knowledge of reality, whether occasioned by perception, language, or memory, necessitates going beyond the information given. It arises through the interaction of that information with the context in which it is presented and with the knower’s preexisting knowledge. In this kind of view—which provides no basis for a rigid differentiation between scientific language and other kinds-language, perception, and knowledge are inextricably intertwined.

Once cognition was recognized as a mental function, this opened up new lines of inquiry into the connection between how people think and the context of those thoughts.

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As thought process began to be explored in greater depth, metaphor recognition became a subject of increasing interest. I. A. Richards is most famous for professing that, “we cannot get through three sentences of ordinary fluid discourse without the use of metaphor.”\textsuperscript{76} Richards called for a new rhetoric that he hoped would, “clarify the confusion inherited from the Lockeian tradition…He demonstrates convincingly that the so-called literal meaning is not equivalent to the meaning of the whole expression.”\textsuperscript{77} According to Richards, “when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single work, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.”\textsuperscript{78} He identified the two thoughts as the subject (he called the “tenor) and the symbol (he called the “vehicle”). Max Black developed Richard’s insight that each metaphor has at least “two different networks of associations” by stressing the cognitive force involved in the metaphoric process.\textsuperscript{79} He also argued that a metaphor is more than an isolated term; it is a sentence that involves a “system of associated commonplaces.”\textsuperscript{80} Black tried to illustrate that metaphors do not necessarily depict symbols that are already innately similar, but rather create associations based on a particular social context.\textsuperscript{81} The cognitive value of metaphor was unlocked by these two scholars and their seminal works paved a path for metaphor studies across an array of disciplines, especially within social linguistics.

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\textsuperscript{76} Richards, \textit{Philosophy of Rhetoric}, 92.
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\textsuperscript{77} Sage, “Metaphor in Literature,” 2459.
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\textsuperscript{78} Richards, \textit{Philosophy of Rhetoric}, 93.
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\textsuperscript{80} Black, \textit{Models and Metaphors}, 39-40.
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2.3 The Cognitive Approach to Metaphor

In 1980, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, expanding upon the theories of Richards and Black, shattered the traditional view that metaphor is used primarily as a figure of speech for ornamental device in their groundbreaking work *Metaphors We Live By*. Instead, Lakoff and Johnson claimed that metaphor is a property of concepts, a tool to better understand certain concepts, and is used by people everyday not just by specially trained poets. According to Weis, this cognitive approach “treats metaphor primarily as a figure of thought, as opposed to a figure of speech, and it examines the mental processes involved in the creation and interpretation of metaphor.” This view espouses that metaphor should be considered an integral part of every day communication and is depicted as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. Their seminal work opened new lines of inquiry into the relevance of metaphor studies and aimed to alter the negative reputation that it had ensued over the years.

For centuries, the prevailing distrust of metaphor was focused on a language level rather than on a thought level, which limited the use of metaphor within various disciplines. Lakoff and Johnson argue that the dichotomy that exists within metaphor studies is a result of the failure of subjectivism and objectivism; “since the time of the Greeks, there has been in Western culture a tension between truth, on the one hand, and art, on the other, with art viewed as illusion and allied, via its link with poetry and

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82 See also, George Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*.


theater, to the tradition of persuasive public oratory.” They proposed a synthesis of subjectivism and objectivism as an alternative:

Metaphor unites reason and imagination. Since the categories of our everyday thought are largely metaphorical and our everyday reasoning involves metaphorical entailments and inferences, ordinary rationality is therefore imaginative by its very nature.

This synthesis of subjectivism and objectivism they termed “imaginative rationality” and is considered an experientialist approach since, according to Kövecses, “truth is relative to our conceptual system, which is grounded in, and constantly tested by, our experiences and those of other members of our culture in our daily interactions with other people and with our physical and cultural environments.” Therefore, a deeper understanding of the cultural context of a particular metaphor should illuminate factors that led to its inception.

The transition from the study of language as purely linguistic to cognitive birthed a new field, cognitive linguistics:

Cognitive linguistics recognizes that the study of language is the study of language use and that when we engage in any language activity, we draw unconsciously on vast cognitive and cultural resources, call up models and frames, set up multiple connections, coordinate large arrays of information, and engage in creative mappings, transfers, and elaborations.”

Metaphor Theory is the strand of cognitive linguistics launched by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in the early 1980s and has changed forever the way metaphor is viewed. Within ten years of the publishing of their seminal work on conceptual metaphor, over

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85 Ibid., 189.
86 Ibid., 193.
87 Ibid, 193.
500 books and articles were written on metaphor in a wide range of academic fields.\textsuperscript{89} Their ideas have been instrumental in obliterating the shroud of negativity surrounding metaphor that have persisted for over two thousand years.

2.4 Metaphor Theory and Biblical Studies

Biblical scholarship on metaphor has been greatly influenced by the philosophic trends of the last two millennia. Marc Zvi Brettler maintains that, “biblicists have shared philosophers’ distrust of metaphor.”\textsuperscript{90} Even the recent shift to a more cognitive view of metaphor has largely been ignored by biblical scholarship. According to Andrea L. Weiss, fundamental works such as \textit{The Language and Imagery of the Bible} by G. B. Caird and \textit{Classical Hebrew Poetry} by Wilfred Watson, provide rather traditional, word-based conceptions of metaphor involving the substitution of one term for another…but do not expound upon the extant research on metaphor.”\textsuperscript{91} The cognitive function of metaphor can be a useful tool to biblical studies, but has yet to be fully utilized.

Peter Macky wrote the first monolith-length study of biblical metaphor in 1990. He provides a basis theoretically for metaphor and specifies a definition of metaphor specific to biblical studies. Macky illuminates many distinct examples of metaphor from the Old and New Testaments, yet he spends little time unpacking these metaphorical expressions. His work has been instrumental, however, in illuminating the importance of


\textsuperscript{90} Brettler, \textit{God Is King}, 26.

metaphor to biblical thought. Presently, biblical scholars are beginning to recognize that metaphor is a dominant characteristic of biblical thought and language.

More recently, David Aaron wrote a book entitled *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery*. 92 Aaron details a theory of metaphor called “conceptual ascription,” which attempts to delineate a third category in between the literal and the metaphorical. This study is highly theoretical, yet Aaron plots an innovative approach to metaphor. Aaron does not agree with George Lakoff, that we are built to think metaphorically. Instead, he conjures that metaphor is “a learned technique of discourse. One does not need to speak with metaphor.” 93 He also rejects many of Lakoff and Johnson’s theories because “by defining metaphors as an aspect of conceptual structure, the authors rob us of important tools for differentiating subtle nuances in language usage, as well as cognition.” 94 Aaron is especially concerned with semantics and the he argues for a gradient approach to metaphor rather than the common pattern of “bifurcating language into metaphorical and non-metaphorical speech.” 95 His research focuses on divine imagery in general and not on one specific metaphor for the divine, but he does specify that, “the more we know about both literary and cultural context, the greater the diagnostic’s chance of yielding an unambiguous result.” 96 I do not agree with

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93 Ibid., 11.

94 Ibid., 110.

95 Ibid., 110.

96 Ibid., 121.
many of his assumptions, but I am convinced that knowledge about the cultural context is key to understanding figurative language in general.

Andrea Weiss’s work on metaphor is specific to the book of Samuel and concentrates on the linguistic aspects of figurative language rather than the “cognitive functioning that takes place when a person processes a metaphor.” She does provide an excellent summary of research on metaphor until 2006, but her emphasis is concerned with language and how certain figures of speech operate in the book of Samuel, rather than the origin and development of one metaphor specifically. Her line of thinking parallels David A. Aaron’s work, but she insists that her study also aims, “to explore the mechanics of metaphor and provide a means of identifying metaphors and distinguishing it from other forms of figurative language.”

Weiss endeavors to use the tools and concepts laid forth by contemporary metaphor theory and apply this to the biblical texts in an attempt to advance the understanding of metaphorical function in the Hebrew Bible. She analyzes a series of metaphors found within the book of Samuel as the corpus of her study because she believed that biblical scholars mainly focused on the poetic sections of the biblical text when looking at metaphor. Weiss investigates biblical prose sections of Samuel to show that metaphor was an aim of not only biblical poets, but biblical authors as well. Her work is not interested in cataloguing a specific metaphor, but rather looking at the complex relationship between several metaphors within a text. I found her section on

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98 Ibid., 32.

99 Ibid., 32.
“identifying biblical metaphors” the most helpful, but the focus of my study is the conceptual development of one metaphor rather than the linguistic development of several metaphors.

In July 2001, several biblical scholars gave papers on the topic of metaphor and the Hebrew Bible at the Society of Biblical Literature (International Meeting) in Rome, Italy. They compiled their work and published in 2005, *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Pierre van Hecke. Each chapter concentrates on a specific metaphor found in various passages throughout the Old Testament. This work highlights the growing interest in metaphor studies within the world of biblical scholarship. This is not surprising given the recent innovations in metaphor research as well as the recognition that metaphor was one of the main tropes used by the biblical writers themselves to describe the abstract, in particular the divine.

Cognitive linguistics has become a useful resource in literature analysis in recent years. Since metaphor is a prevalent mode of communication in biblical literature, conceptual metaphor theory has become a beneficial method of interpretation in biblical studies as well. The goal of this study is to utilize metaphor theory as well as traditional biblical methods of interpretation, such as the material remains and comparative cultural evidence, to illuminate the development of one strain of biblical thought. The interplay between literary analysis, comparative textual evidence, and material culture can work in tandem to illustrate a more comprehensive picture of ancient Israelite society. In this

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way, metaphor theory can add another layer of information to our perception of the society that produced the biblical literature.

2.5 The Definition of Metaphor for this Study

There is not a consensus among scholars on a precise definition of “metaphor.” H. H. Lieb, a theoretical linguist, even claims to have found 125 different definitions! Traditionally, metaphor is defined as: “that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another.”¹⁰¹ For the purposes of this study a cognitive linguistic view of metaphor will be utilized which recognizes that, according to George Lakoff and Mark Turner, “there exist basic conceptual metaphors for understanding life and death that are part of our culture and that we routinely use to make sense of the poetry of our culture.”¹⁰² For instance, the English guide to metaphor acknowledges that the following two phrases: “he began to reap the harvest of his sound training” or, “this will make it difficult to weed out people unsuitable for the profession,” are two of numerous metaphors based on plant imagery.¹⁰³ Planting imagery is these instances are associated with a contemporary work environment, but they evoke images of agriculture.

Zoltan Kövecses argues that the PLANT metaphor is a complex metaphorical concept that can refer to “people, social organizations, scientific disciplines, economic and political systems, human relationships, sets of ideas and others.”¹⁰⁴ This metaphor is used quite frequently because the progression of a seed to a blossoming plant is an

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ecological process associated with everyday knowledge, particularly in predominantly agrarian societies.¹⁰⁵

Primary metaphors are often grouped together in particular cultures to form “complex” metaphors. For example, people are associated with plants in the primary metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS. This metaphor is considered a cross-cultural primary metaphor because many ancient societies portrayed people as plants in their conceptual mappings. Even cave paintings from the Upper Paleolithic period portray this idea.¹⁰⁶

Within this broader metaphor, eighth century B.C.E. Hebrew literature depicts the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL. This metaphor reflects a specific cultural understanding at a specific time, which bolsters the argument that metaphor theory is an important tool for cultural study. According to Kövecses, “complex metaphors are more important to cultural considerations. It is complex metaphors-not primary metaphors-with which people actually engage in their thought in real cultural contexts.”¹⁰⁷ Ancient Israelites were keenly aware of their surroundings and so the physical environment as well as the social context, greatly influenced the metaphorical mappings.

The early poetic pieces found within the biblical text, such as the Song of the Sea, depict the Israelite God in specific metaphoric terms, which are often reflective of nature.

¹⁰⁵ According to Kövecses, “the natural and physical environment shapes a language, primarily its vocabulary, in an obvious way; consequently, it will shape the metaphor as well.” Kövecses, Metaphor, 187.


Lieven Boeve and Kurt Feyaerts noticed that, “throughout the course of time most of the
lexical categories (words) used for understanding God have not changed so that formally
these images (metaphors) remain rather stable.” \(^{108}\) One of the main reasons Lakoff and
Turner wrote their field guide to poetic metaphor was to show that poetic metaphor is
powerful and should be included in the “domain of reason.” They argue that poets have a
unique ability to use everyday thought and illuminate those thoughts through “the
extension, composition, and criticism of the basic metaphorical tools through which we
comprehend much of reality.” \(^{109}\) These poets are speakers for a shared culture and a
common memory. Therefore, as the social reality changes, the metaphorical
representation of reality changes as well. Analysis of key poetic texts at pivotal junctions
in the social and historical make-up of a society, can thus offer a glimpse of cultural
identity just as clearly as prose texts.

In conclusion, this study will predominantly approach metaphor from a semantic
level, rather than from the level of syntax. The primary tenet of cognitive semantic
research is that conceptual systems are determined by an understanding and interaction
with the world. \(^{110}\) The way humans think is metaphorical and so the predominant
metaphors of a culture are important to understanding cultural context. These metaphors
constitute meaning and should be carefully examined because according to Lakoff, “once
we learn a conceptual metaphor, it is just there, a ready and powerful tool.” \(^{111}\)


\(^{110}\) Boeve and Feyaerts, “Religious Metaphors in a Postmodern Culture,” 175.

conceptual metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL is the tool that this study seeks to analyze, from its early inception throughout biblical literature and some Second Temple texts. Even more specifically, the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL will be examined within the planting imagery. This analysis also aims to investigate the cultural and social factors that sustained this metaphor throughout biblical history.

2.6 What this Dissertation is Not

Even though “metaphor” is considered a category of literary analysis, this study will be grounded in the historical and cultural background of ancient Israel. Metaphor theory is the catalyst for an in-depth probe into the beliefs and customs of an ancient society. The goal of this study is not to examine each and every metaphor for the divine, but only one in particular, the divine as planter of the people. Therefore, references to other metaphors for the divine will be limited.

There are several passages in the Hebrew Bible that portray rich garden imagery, such as the Creation Account and the poetic descriptions within the Song of Songs. This dissertation is narrowly focused on YHWH as the planter of the people. Therefore, only instances where ancient Jewish texts actually mention God planting or uprooting will be analyzed. The Song of Songs depicts lush garden imagery, yet our metaphor is not apparent in this text. The Shulammite woman is compared to a plant (4:13), but she is not physically planted, let alone planted by the divine. The Song does describe vineyards in some detail, so some of these references may be mentioned in chapters four and five of this study, since these chapters are concerned with depicting the importance of viticulture in ancient Israel.
Furthermore, the Song of Songs is difficult to date. According to Temper Longman III, “observations of the language as well as the authorship of the book lead to an agnostic stand on the issue of date.”\footnote{Most scholars date the Song of Songs late. See Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2001), 19. Also, Daniel C. Fredericks and Daniel J. Estes, *Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs* (Apollos OTC 16; Downer Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 271-3, for a more thorough discussion of the various debates regarding dating the Songs.} Finally, the lyrical and often erotic poetry found within the Songs is unique to this particular book of the Hebrew Bible. Since authorship, date, and interpretation are so hotly debated this dissertation will not analyze these poems in detail.

2.7 Conclusion

Metaphor was classified for two millennia as a literary device encouraging embellishment rather than truth. However, recent advances in cognitive linguistics have shown that people utilize metaphor as a way of conceptualizing the world. Metaphor does not occur primarily in language but in thought.\footnote{Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.} Therefore, analyzing a culture’s primary metaphors illuminates thought patterns within the social context.

The metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE illustrates one portrait of the divine/human relationship in biblical literature. There are dozens of passages depicting the people as plants and YHWH as the planter in the Hebrew Bible (see Appendix 1). The material world, horticulture in particular, is utilized as a source domain and the relationship between YHWH and the people is the target domain. However, the metaphor of the divine as a planter is not exclusive to ancient Israel.
Chapter three will situate this metaphor in its cultural context: ancient Near Eastern storm-god imagery.
Chapter Three

Common Metaphors for the Divine and Ancient Hebrew Poetry

3.1 Introduction

According to Lakoff and Johnson, “the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture.”\textsuperscript{114} At first glance, metaphor is a literary technique where one object or idea is compared to another object or idea. This is a rather simplistic view of metaphor, however, that does not take into account the conceptual framework behind the comparison. Often, the goal of metaphorical description is to shed light on abstract or complex situations. Therefore, physical realities and fundamental cultural concepts become the building blocks for the dominant metaphorical structures. Peter Macky argues that these same principles are apparent in biblical metaphor; “In the Bible the prototypical metaphors propose relatively better known symbols as ways to provide illumination of relatively more mysterious subjects.”\textsuperscript{115} I would argue that while known physical symbols are the basis for most divine metaphors, these metaphorical mappings are more instrumental in revealing the influence of ancient Near Eastern mythology on YHWH’s earliest persona than illuminating a ‘mysterious’ subject.

This chapter will investigate how commonplace metaphors for YHWH in biblical literature reflect the ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu. YHWH’s portrayal as a warrior/storm-god was not a phenomenon of ancient Israel, but rather emerged from

\textsuperscript{114} Lakoff and Johnson, \textit{Metaphors We Live By}, 22.

\textsuperscript{115} Macky, \textit{Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought}, 63.
Mesopotamia with the spread of agriculture. The Israelite deity shares many affinities with storm-gods from contemporaneous cultures, ancient Canaanite traditions in particular. A brief survey of ancient Near Eastern storm-gods will highlight not only the commonalities, but the deviations as well.

The survey of the ancient Near Eastern storm-gods will be followed by an analysis of five early Hebrew poems (Psalm 29; Judg 5:4-5; Deut 32:8-27; Hab 3:3-15; Exod 15:1-18). These poems highlight the metaphorical depiction of YHWH as a storm-god in control of the agricultural cycle as well as a divine warrior, conqueror of the forces of chaos. Furthermore, the central metaphor for this study YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE will be introduced in conjunction with an analysis of Exod 15:1-18. Thus, the main goals of this chapter are twofold. Firstly, to investigate the cultural context behind the storm-god imagery discernible within early biblical texts. And secondly, to demonstrate that metaphor is a dominant mode of thought in poetic texts, especially when depicting the divine.

3.2 Metaphor, Myth, and Ancient Near Eastern Poetry

3.2.1 Introduction
The discoveries of the Babylonian creation epic Enuma Elish in 1876 and the Ugaritic mythic texts in 1929 at Ras Shamra have illuminated a visible connection between ancient Israelite cosmogony and mythology and its Canaanite neighbors. The Ugaritic literary texts as well as many of the surviving literatures of ancient Mesopotamia are often written in a poetic form similar to the poetry found in the Hebrew Bible. Many of these cultures were not located in close proximity to ancient Israel, but affinities
between the literatures have been noticed.\textsuperscript{116} The depiction of storm-gods in Mesopotamian and Ugaritic literature indicate a common cultural milieu, which may have influenced the portrayal of YHWH as a storm-god in the biblical literature as well.

The archetypal metaphorical depictions of YHWH in the biblical text are comparable to traits of ancient Near Eastern warrior/storm gods. In particular, YHWH exhibits many of the characteristics of Baal and El, the two leading deities in the Ugaritic pantheon. Patrick D. Miller, who has written extensively on the divine warrior in early Israel, argues:

There can be no doubt that in many respects the imagery associated with Yahweh is the same as that associated with Baal, particularly with regard to Yahweh as warrior. He battles as the storm god, riding or driving the clouds. He sends forth his voice and the enemies flee. He battles the monsters of the deep who represent death and chaos, as does Baal…One may assume that the direct contact with Baalism from an early period strongly influenced the way Israel conceived its God…Yahweh seems to have been strongly related to El. Part of the answer is to be seen in the act that Baal and El shared certain characteristics, which must have been assimilated in the character of Yahweh.\textsuperscript{117}

Early depictions of YHWH resemble a combination of the characteristics of these two prototypes, which became the basis for his narrative identity for millennia. Interestingly, depictions of El and Baal are also enshrouded in metaphorical discourse reminiscent of the natural environment.


\textsuperscript{117} Patrick D. Miller, \textit{The Divine Warrior} (HSM 5; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 60. Ugaritic literature is often compared with biblical literature because of Israel’s relative proximity to ancient Ugarit. Furthermore, the natural affinities between Baal and YHWH provide another point of correlation.
3.2.2 Metaphor and Poetic Depictions of the Divine

The influential study by Marjo Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine*, concluded that Ugaritic literature shares at least half of its metaphors for the divine with the Old Testament.\(^\text{118}\) These metaphors are often identical and are typically crouched in a similar mythical language. According to Korpel, “Ugaritic myths offer a continuous narrative, like a modern film, whereas the biblical sources provide a series of glimpses, a handful of snapshots or frames; both derived from the same tradition of continuous narrative.”\(^\text{119}\) In the biblical text, poetic hymns and poems describing the divine are often found within narrative or law sections. Their presence within particular narrative prose texts is often questioned. Therefore, examining the early poetry as individual snapshots is the key to noting the archetypical metaphors associated with the divine.

Korpel’s investigation confirms that, “both in Ugarit and Israel metaphors describing the divine were used knowingly.”\(^\text{120}\) Until fairly recently, the religion of ancient Israel was thought to be distinct from its ‘pagan’ neighbors.\(^\text{121}\) Analysis of the corpus of texts from Ugarit and other Mesopotamian cultures has unearthed a remarkable amount of cross-cultural comparisons and scholars are now more aware of the outside influences on ancient Israelite religious thought. These metaphors were chosen from

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118 Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 621.


120 Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 631.

human experiences in everyday life, such as the natural landscape, the ecological environment, and warfare.

The early descriptions of the divine are not only metaphoric in nature, but are often shrouded in language typically classified as “mythical.” According to Earl R. MacCormac, “the language of myth arises out of the language of metaphor, for myth without metaphor is impossible.”¹²² Since these texts illustrate divine interaction with society, mythic elements are often present as well. Therefore, a discussion of the complexities of mythical classification is essential to understanding the metaphorical discourse in Hebrew poetry.

### 3.2.3 Metaphor and Myth

What is myth? Myth is a complex word to define because in popular culture most people think of myth as fictitious and untrue, juxtaposed with history, which describes fact or truth.¹²³ This is a secondary definition of myth, however, and should not be confused with the interpretation of myth as a category of ancient literature. These myths contain stories about the early traditions of a culture and usually entail a description of a divine encounter.

Scholars who specialize in figurative language often crystallize their own interpretations of myth. For example, G. B. Caird’s delineation of the term “myth” is considerably broader than the dictionary’s definition; “myths are stories about the past

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which embody and express a people’s traditional culture.”\textsuperscript{124} According to Caird, a supernatural event is not necessary and so almost any early recollection of a society can be considered mythic. Paul Ricœur, on the other hand, postulates a more specific definition of myth as, “a traditional narration which relates to events that happened at \textit{the beginning of time} (italics mine) and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men of today and, in a general manner, establishing all the forms of actions and thought by which a man understands himself in his world.”\textsuperscript{125} Ricœur’s definition is narrowly concerned with events that happened at the beginning of time, namely creation accounts. Mythic material is often associated with the primeval history of various cultures, yet myths are recorded outside of this material as well. For the purposes of this study, G. B. Cairds’ definition is too broad and Paul Ricœur’s definition is too narrow.

The religious historian, Mircea Eliade, spent considerable time writing about myth and the differentiation between sacred space and profane space. He defines myth as:

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial time, the fabled time of the “beginnings.” In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality-an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institutions. Myth, then, is always an account of a “creation”...In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the “supernatural”) into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really \textit{establishes} the World and makes it what it I today.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124} Caird, \textit{Language and Imagery of the Bible}, 220.


Eliade incorporates both cosmogonic myths as well as myths which describe the creation of a society or an institution in his interpretation of myth. He was not preoccupied with determining the exact moment a myth was conceived, but rather with the method of conception: the breakthrough of the sacred into profane space. Therefore, his definition of myth is more functional than those of either Caird or Ricœur, which were concerned with either the overarching events of a nation or narrowly focused on the cosmogony of the world.

The description of the breakthrough of the Sacred into the material world on behalf of the ancient Israelites is perhaps the dominant theme of early Hebrew poetry. These stories became “living myths” for an emerging nation and recitation of this poetry evoked the memory of the mythical event.

In living myths, mythic persons break through and abolish the limits of profane time, space, and history. Mythic believers, through the “reiteration” and “reenactment” of myths, through their participation in rituals and other significant activities based on their superhuman, exemplary mythic models, actually become contemporaneous with the Supernatural Beings, Ancestors, and sacred events described in the myths.127

Descriptions of the divine were an important component of ancient Near Eastern group formation. Recitation of mythic stories contributed to group identity and unification. Earl R. MacCormac noted that, “myth has the function of organizing the beliefs and practices of a society.”128 These stories were either sung at festivals or became a part of the rituals of ancient civilizations. For example, a New Year’s (Akitu) festival was celebrated in ancient Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Ugarit.

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Since there are clearly many shared topoi with ancient Near Eastern traditions, biblical myths should be read within their specific cultural context.\textsuperscript{129} For many years, biblical scholarship attempted to classify myth and paganism as a separate entity from history and monotheism.\textsuperscript{130} The singularity of ancient Israel as a nation embedded in specific historical events was contrasted with the neighboring societies’ preoccupation with the ebb and flow of the natural world. The development of ancient Israelite religion, however, is more complex than was once assumed and contained both mythical and historical elements.\textsuperscript{131} Therefore, studying the texts from various ancient Near Eastern civilizations is paramount to recognizing re-occurring motifs as well as acknowledging Israel’s mythopoetic roots. This comparative approach is especially helpful when discussing themes in early Hebrew poetry, storm-god imagery in particular.

3.3 Ancient Near Eastern Storm-gods: An Introduction

The storm-god became a recognizable figure in ancient Near Eastern iconographic and epigraphic sources as agriculture became the viable livelihood. The male Deity as a gardener or cultivator emerged in ancient Mesopotamia with the rise of agricultural societies and male dominated rulers. Green noticed that in the early Neolithic period, “the overwhelming number of prehistoric figurines, frescoes, and other artifacts instead


\textsuperscript{130} For a more detailed discussion of this dichotomy, see Fishbane, \textit{Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking}, 31-32, 41.

\textsuperscript{131} Cross, \textit{Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic}, 89.
evolved around a ‘magna mater.’”132 As city-states emerged in the third millennium B.C.E., however, the male deity began to overshadow the goddess of fertility and eventually became associated with the male leader of the city.133 By the mid-third millennium, most of the gods have been identified and each city had its own god.134 The storm-god was thought to have direct control over the periodic rainfall, which directly impacted the harvest cycle.

David Schwemer recently wrote a monograph on weather-god imagery, which has greatly contributed to an understanding of the historical background and literary material available on this topic.135 According to Schwemer, “storm and tempest (along with thunder, clouds, rain, and wind) belong to those natural phenomena that cannot be influenced by human intervention and, at the same time, are of immediate significance in agrarian societies for the survival of humans.”136 Storm or drought greatly affected the inhabitants that depended upon agriculture for survival. Therefore, the storm-god’s nature and subsequent attitude became intertwined with the success or failure of the

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134 See Green, Storm God in the Ancient Near East, 77.


agricultural cycle. Many of these storm-gods also shared common traits and attributes, reflective of the cultural interplay.

3.3.1 Ancient Mesopotamian Storm-gods: Enlil and Ishkur-Adad

The Storm-god Enlil was the patron deity of Nippur and this city was considered the most sacred city in southern Mesopotamia. Enlil is portrayed as both a violent warrior and a fatherly protector of all humans. Alberto R. W. Green, who has also contributed significantly to the emerging picture of storm-gods in the ancient Near East, maintains that the Storm-god Enlil is found in written sources from the earliest known historical civilization of Mesopotamia. These textual sources as well as pictographic images tie this storm-god to the agricultural cycle.

In pictographic sources of Sumero-Akkadian Storm-gods, it is customary to find scenes such as a lion walking beside the deity, who guides a plough that its also drawn by two lions, or the dragon, a symbol of fertility, being guided by the deity as it turns ups the furrow in preparing the fields for harvest. These symbols are descriptive of the ancient Sumerians’ conception of Enlil in Early Dynastic I and II. In the emerging city-states, the emphasis was on subsistence and fertility, with a concentration on irrigation and agricultural concerns. The primary attribute of “Lord Storm” at this stage was providing fertility.

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138 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 78. Also see Green’s footnote #343.

139 Ibid., 34.

140 Schwemer does not agree with Green that Enlil should be considered a storm-god. According to Schwemer, “Enlil is associated with the abundant growth of grain and the space of air between heaven and earth…There is, however, no reason to assume that these passages refer to Enlil’s primary or cosmological role within the Sumerian pantheon.” Daniel Schwemer, “The Storm-Gods in the Ancient Near East: Part I,” 126. However, Schwemer does label Ishkur a storm-god and Enlil is considered his father. Since there is little agreement over this issue and Enlil is associated with the heavens, I have included Enlil as a storm-god for the purposes of this study.

141 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 79.
Enlil guided the plough and subdued the floodwaters so that the irrigation of the plants could produce the yield necessary to feed the inhabitants. He was the provider and the protector of the people, but he was especially concerned with agriculture (see Illustration 1). In an Early Dynastic hymn, Enlil is upheld as the god who makes the vines grow:

O mighty one, you who hold the rains of heaven  
And the waters of the earth,  
Enlil, you who hold the halter of the gods (of nature),  
Father Enlil, you are the one  
Who makes the vines grow up.  

This ancient Mesopotamian storm-god controlled the amount of rain that fell, he determined the level of the floodwaters on the earth, and he was responsible for the germination of the land. In this way, Enlil became “the archetypal profile of every

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subsequent ancient Near Eastern Storm-god. For example, the Babylonian Storm-god Ishkur-Adad is often depicted as a violent and devastating force as well as the sustainer of nature, similar to Enlil:

When the lord is raging, the heavens tremble.  
At Ishkur’s wrath, the earth on its part also shakes.  
The great mountains…are all thrown down.  

Decked with august fearful splendor,  
Who with his whoop  
Herds together the thick rain-clouds,  
And causes the udder to bear copious milk,  
Flooding the whole earth with plenty and abundance.

Schwemer argues that the sources connected with Ishkur center around three motifs: “1) the destroyer who threatens fields and settlements with storm and flood, 2) the bringer of rain, who nurtures vegetation and fauna, 3) the young warrior who goes into battle on his chariot drawn by storm-demons for his father, An or Enlil, and lays waste to it.” Even though Enlil was associated more with agriculture than storm motifs, Ishkur embodied the typical characteristics of a storm-god and he is remembered as one who brought the rains.

The topography and sociopolitical circumstances may have altered the patron storm-gods appearance in various ways, but the overarching characteristics of the patron deity as a sustainer as well as a fierce destroyer of nature remain consistent within ancient

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143 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 41.


Mesopotamian sources.\textsuperscript{147} Since the agriculture in these regions relied mainly on rainfall, Schwemer argues that, “storm-gods ranked among the most prominent gods in the local panthea or were even regarded as divine kings, ruling over the gods and bestowing kingship on the human ruler.”\textsuperscript{148} Ancient Mesopotamian storm-gods emerged out of the rise of agriculture as the mainstay of the populations and became associated with storm imagery.

3.3.2 Ancient Syrian Storm-god: Hadad/Baal

Hadad/Adad was the title of the great Semitic Storm-god. He was the “creator of fertility, but by withholding moisture from the heavens he could also bring destruction to the land or, conversely, he could send devastating floods.”\textsuperscript{149} Hammurabi’s code paints a telling picture of this early storm-god:

\begin{quote}
May Adad, the lord of abundance,
The irrigator of heaven and earth, my helper,
Deprive him of the rains from heaven
(And) the floodwaters from the springs!
May he bring his land to destruction through want and hunger:
May he thunder furiously over his city,
And turn his land into the desolation of flood!\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{148} Green, \textit{Storm God in the Ancient Near East}, 167.

\textsuperscript{149} Green, \textit{Storm God in the Ancient Near East}, 72.

In this text, Hammurabi prays that Hadad will destroy the enemy by flooding and violent storm. Hadad is known to cause irrevocable damage, yet the storm-god is attributed as an aid to the king as well.

One of Hadad’s more popular titles, Baal ‘lord,’ is well known from the Ugaritic Literature. According to Green, “the title Baal ‘lord’ aptly epitomized Hadad’s supremacy in written sources starting in the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age; it was eventually used in place of Hadad in most regions of western Syria.”\(^{151}\) Baal was responsible for subduing the powers of Chaos, and according to the iconography, granting fertility to the fields (see Illustration 2).\(^{152}\) Also know as “the Rider of the Clouds,” Baal was associated with nature and natural phenomena, as were many of the second tier dieites in the Ugaritic divine council.\(^{153}\) This led to various conflicts in the Ugaritic mythology, as feuding members of the pantheon struggled for power.\(^{154}\)

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\(^{151}\) Green, *The Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 173.


\(^{153}\) Mark Smith analyzes the Ugaritic divine council as well as the particular role of Baal. See Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 42-48.

Illustration 2: Stela of the Storm-god Baal (Louvre Museum). Notice the shaft of Baal. The upper end of the shaft ends in plant-like lines. Schwemer argues, “that this vegetal shaft-end has been interpreted as a symbol for the vegetation-furthereing effect of the storm-god, as a ‘tree-of-life’, as ‘tree-weapon’ or as a stylized lightning symbol.”

The climate in ancient Syria contributed to the power struggle apparent among the Ugaritic pantheon of gods. De Moor points out that climate was a key factor in this power struggle; “In contrast to Egypt and some parts of Mesopotamia, Canaan was totally dependent on rain for its agriculture and cattle-breeding. In this semi-arid region sufficient rainfall in the period from October through April was crucial to the sustenance of life.” The region’s reliance on a certain level of rainfall and the inherent fear of flooding destroying the vegetation, led to the rising importance of Baal as the Storm-god par excellence of the region in contrast to the aging El.


156 de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism, 78.
In the Baal Myth, Baal defeats the god Yam (Sea), but he is never able to completely destroy him, which perpetuates the ongoing fear of the raging storms among the people of Ugarit.\footnote{De Moor concluded from the cyclical nature of this myth, “that the people of Ugarit continued to regard the monsters of Yammu as a daily threat to their life.”} Schwemer proposes that “the cyclical plot of the story suggests a seasonal interpretation,” which could coincide with the fall and spring festivals.\footnote{His theory deserves some merit considering Baal’s association with the agricultural cycle and the dependence of the people on rainfall for survival. Baal remained a powerful presence in the texts, but he never truly realized his ambition to become the storm-god and chief deity of his region.}

3.3.3 Ancient Israelite Storm-god: YHWH

Early depictions of the god of Ancient Israel can be compared with the characteristic traits of ancient Near Eastern Storm-gods. For example, Psalm 29:3-11 portrays YHWH as a storm-god comparable to the Canaanite god Baal:

\begin{quote}
Psalm 29:3-11

\begin{verbatim}
כֹּלִּי הָיוֹת עַל-הָיוֹת אֶל-הָבוֹד הָרִיעָה יְהוָה עַל-יִמּוֹ צָרָה:
כֹּלִי הָיוֹת שֶׁבֶר אַרְבָּאִים יְהוָה אֵל-אֲרוֹי הָלוֹנָה;
וְרָקִיעֵהּ כֶּֽמֶּשֶׁל לֵבָנָה שֶׁרְמָֽמִים;
כֹּלִי הָיוֹת חֲצָֽב לַחֲבֲחָה אַל-שָׁא:
כֹּלִי הָיוֹת איֲדוֹר בִּלְיָֽל יְהוָה מֶרֶבּ כָּל-ךָֽשָׁפָֽת;
כֹּלִי הָיוֹת לַחֲלַת אָרָיוֹת וַיִּשָּׁפְּךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשָּׁפְּךָ בָּלֵי אֵמוֹ כָּבָֽד;
יְהוָה לְמָבְלִֽבֵּל יַשְּׁבָר רֹשֶׁב יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ לֵעָלָֽמִים;
יְהוָה מָלַֽמְךָ מָלַֽמְךָ יְהוָה יְבָרַךְ אֶת-עָמָֽדְךָ:
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

157 See KTU 1.2: IV.28ff
158 de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism, 89.
The voice of YHWH is over the waters;  
    the God of glory thunders,  
    YHWH, over mighty waters.
The voice of YHWH is powerful;  
    the voice of YHWH is full of majesty.  
The voice of YHWH breaks the cedars;  
    YHWH breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,  
    and Sirion like a young wild ox.  
The voice of YHWH flashes forth flames of fire.  
The voice of YHWH shakes the wilderness;  
    YHWH shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of YHWH causes the oaks to whirl,  
    and strips the forest bare;  
    and in his temple all say, “Glory!”
YHWH sits enthroned over the flood;  
    YHWH sits enthroned as king forever.
May YHWH give strength to his people!  
    May YHWH bless his people with peace!

According to this hymn, YHWH’s voice sliced trees in half and lightening accompanied his speech. He is depicted as the god who sits ‘enthroned’ over the Yamm, never to be defeated. This is the early picture of the divine that emerges in biblical literature. Frank Moore Cross argues that the images of, “fire and light, smoke and shining cloud, thunder and quaking are all elements intimately bound together in the poetic descriptions of the theophany of the storm god, or the attack of the Divine Warrior.”¹⁶⁰ The imagery associated with the storm-god and divine warrior is often interrelated. Green maintains that, “this piece of early Yahwistic poetry clearly identifies YHWH as a Storm-god fulfilling a mythical function parallel to that of Baal and other Near Eastern Storm-gods.”¹⁶¹ Psalm 29 is not the only text that portrays YHWH as a storm-god comparable to

¹⁶⁰ Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 169.
¹⁶¹ Green, Storm God in the Ancient Near East, 263-64.
ancient Near Eastern storm-gods. Early Hebrew poetry consistently reflects typological
storm-god characteristics.

3.4 Snapshots of the Divine in Early Hebrew Poetry

3.4.1 Introduction

The language used to describe the emerging picture of the god of the ancient
Israelites, YHWH, can be found in several hymns sprinkled throughout the biblical text.
Judges 5, Deuteronomy 32, Habakkuk 3, and Exod 15:1-18 are often referenced as
representing an early form of ancient Israelite religious thought. They are typically
considered early Hebrew poetry due to content, affinities to other ancient Near Eastern
poetry, and archaisms. According to Mark S. Smith, “while old myths were commonly
readopted in Ancient Israel, new myths were rarely created.” Therefore, the mythic
material found in the Hebrew Bible played a pivotal role in the formation of the ancient
Israelite society. Myths of the divine’s narrative identity are most frequently found in the
early poetry. Smith utilized the Ugaritic Baal Cycle as a standard to determine several
passages of mythic material in biblical literature.

The goal of this study is not to discuss in detail each of these hymns, but rather to
show that metaphorical and mythic language depicting the divine was common in early

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162 These four poems are not a comprehensive list of early Hebrew poetry, but merely a selective few. For
further information about early Hebrew poetry, see David A. Robertson, Linguistic Evidence in Dating
Early Hebrew Poetry (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972). Robertson was the first to date
many of these poems. Also see, Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques.

163 Smith, Origins of Biblical Monotheism, 23.

164 According to Smith, “all scholars agree that the Baal Cycle is ‘myth,’ and biblical material using divine
imagery comparable to divine imagery from the Baal Cycle may be characterized as ‘mythic material.’”
Ibid., 23.

165 Ibid., 23, for a full listing of what Smith classifies as “myth” in the Hebrew Bible.
Hebrew poetry. Johannes C. de Moor argues that, “because the Ugaritic texts are all couched in poetry, the hypothesis of Cassuto, Albright and others to the effect the at the earliest traditions of Israel will also have been transmitted in poetic form, deserves our trust.” The diverse depictions of the divine in these poems portray a varied landscape of mythological associations, most of which represent shared cultural motifs. The descriptions of the divine found in Exodus 15 will be analyzed in greater depth than the other three poems since this is the pivotal text for our study.

3.4.2 The Song of Deborah (Judg 5:1-31)

4 יוהו בצתתך משפיר בני נ�ך מסורה אזרך אדום אגרא נפשו והשפת המשים

5 הרימ נוֹל מַפֶּני יוהו והכֶּנֶּn

YHWH, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens poured, the clouds indeed poured water. The mountains quaked before YHWH, the One of Sinai, before YHWH, the God of Israel (Judg 5:4-5).

The Song of Deborah describes a battle between Israel and Canaan at Taanach (by the waters of Megiddo). David Noel Freedman argues that this poem recounts a, “decisive episode in the struggle for control of the central and northern areas of Palestine.” The Song of Deborah is considered a victory hymn for YHWH, the god who delivered Deborah and the tribes from Sisera’s armies and the kings allied with him. Just as in Exodus 15, YHWH is described as a storm-warrior. The god of ancient Israel

\[166\] de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism, 8.

marched into battle as a warrior and brought a storm that eventually led to the demise of the enemies. Patrick D. Miller analyzed this poem and he concluded that, “the Song of Deborah belongs to a context of covenant, tribal league, and holy war set against the mytho-theological concept of the divine warrior’s fighting with and for Israel.” Much of the imagery of the divine warrior is very archaic and derives directly from Canaanite tradition. Divine power was manifested in the sudden flooding of the Kishon and the river disabled the Canaanite chariots. YHWH is pictured here as a warrior, storm-god, and deliverer of the people.

3.4.3 The Song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43)

The Song of Moses is an ancient hymn attributed to Moses just before his death on Mount Nebo. The song is usually classified as covenant law or wisdom literature,

Indeed their rock is not like our Rock; our enemies are fools. Their vine comes from the vinestock of Sodom, from the vineyards of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters are bitter; their wine is the poison of serpents, the cruel venom of asps.

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168 Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 87.

169 Korpel, *Rift in the Cloud*, 514.

170 Ibid., 18.


According to Mathew Thiessen, “three factors (shifts in person, changes of speaker, and imperatives/interrogatives) lead one to conclude that in the Song we have evidence of a liturgical work of Israel, it is best to compare the Song of Moses to liturgies of Scripture.”\footnote{Matthew Thiessen, “The Form and Function of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1-42),” \textit{JBL} 123 (2004): 414-15.} William L. Holladay also notes that this song “shares little with the legal and sermonic material of Deuteronomy.”\footnote{William L. Holladay, “Jeremiah and Moses: Further Observations,” \textit{JBL} 85 (1966): 18.} The archaic morphology and vocabulary attest to an early composition and its strategic placing right before Moses’s death, highlights its significance to the ancient Israelite community.

The Song of Moses is one of several early poems in which YHWH is referred to as “the Rock.”\footnote{Cf. Gen 49:24; 1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:2, 3, 32; etc.} This is an interesting metaphor because typically God is depicted anthropomorphically in the biblical text.\footnote{Other impersonal metaphors for God taken from nature: God as ‘fire’, ‘rock’, ‘lion’, and eagle’. See Kristen Nielsen, “Metaphors and Biblical Theology,” in \textit{Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible} (ed. P. van Hecke; BETL 187; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 264, for an interesting discussion on the rock metaphor for God. For a monograph on the rock metaphor, see, Kowalski’s Ph.D. diss., “Rock of Ages.”} In the Old Testament this metaphor is used thirty-three times as a metaphor for God and once as a metaphor for gods (Deut 32:31).\footnote{Nielsen, “Metaphors and Biblical Theology,” 265.}

The impersonal metaphor “YHWH is Rock” is reiterated four times in the Song of Moses (vs. 4, 15, 18, 31).
Vine imagery is also present in this song. The enemies of YHWH are portrayed as vines from the stock of Sodom and Gomorrah producing ‘poisonous grapes.’ Warrior YHWH vows to “make arrows drunk with blood” against those who hate him, a synthesis of viticulture imagery with divine warfare (v. 41-42). Vine imagery is often appropriated to the people of ancient Israel as well, which will be discussed in detail in the upcoming chapters. YHWH is also portrayed in this song as the creator (v. 6), the protector in the wilderness (v. 10), and an avenger (v. 24).

3.4.4 Habakkuk 3

Was your wrath against the rivers, O YHWH? Or your anger against the rivers, or your rage against the sea (Yam), when you drove your horses, your chariots to victory?
You brandished your naked bow, sated were the arrows at your command.

Habakkuk 3 is an ancient song that clearly describes YHWH as a storm-god warrior, similar to the Canaanite Baal.178 For example, Baal is also described as a warrior with a spear of lightning who battled ‘Prince Sea’ and ‘Judge River.’179 This poem shares affinities with Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 29 as well.180

178 See Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 156-157. In early poetry we see similar patterns and motifs: “the language of theophany in early Israel was primarily language drawn from the theophany of Baal.” See also, Green, Storm God in the Ancient Near East, 265.


As is customary with much of biblical poetry, there is little consensus regarding the song’s origin or exact *Sitz im Leben*. J. H. Eaton notes that readers are, “puzzled by the confusing mixture of Hebrew perfects and imperfects, the lack of historical data relating the theophany to its context, and above all the problem of tracing a meaningful sequence of thought throughout the psalm.” What is apparent is that the language of Habakkuk 3 is saturated with mythological imagery. For example, the appearance of YHWH is compared to a sunrise and he is wearing the horned crown of the deity. YHWH is depicted as coming down from a mountain, causing violent earthquakes and plagues on earth, and ordering the collapse of “eternal” mountains. The earth itself is afraid of the divine warrior with his bow and chariot and the moon ceased from moving. The theophany closes with a first person affirmation of YHWH’s strength and omnipotent power.

The aim of God’s warfare in this poem is not clear, but its association with creation and the divine defeat of the watery chaos, often links this poem with the descriptions of YHWH in Psalm 29 and Exodus 15. In this song, the divine is likened to the sun (v. 4), he is the creator and commander of his creation (v. 3, 6), the defeater of the

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181 See Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 260, for a detailed list of scholarship on the composition of this text.


Yam and River (v. 8), and the divine warrior (v. 8-15). The hymn echoes the battles of earlier days and recalls the extraordinary events of the exodus.\(^\text{184}\)

### 3.4.5 The Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-18)

According to the biblical text, this song was sung by Moses and the Israelites to celebrate the victory of YHWH over Pharaoh and his army at the sea.\(^\text{185}\) Based on the archaic language and parallels to Ugaritic poetry, Frank Moore Cross argues for a late twelfth or even early eleventh century B.C.E. composition.\(^\text{186}\) Many scholars have

\(^{184}\) Interestingly, the last few verses of this poem highlight viticulture: “Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines…yet I will rejoice in YHWH (Hab 3:17a, 18a). This passage will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

\(^{185}\) The purpose of this study is not to determine if an actual exodus occurred. I will be looking at the long interpretative literary tradition associated with this song. The archaeological evidence may not verify these events, but the exodus tradition itself is a central theme in the biblical text from an early date. Nahum Sarna states, “the historical core of an Exodus of some sort seems highly likely…Otherwise how can we account for the adoption of this epic as Israel’s foundation narrative?” Nahum Sarna, “Israel in Egypt: The Egyptian Sojourn and the Exodus,” in Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple (ed. H. Shanks; Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1999), 45. Also, Baruch Halpern, “The Exodus from Egypt: Myth or Reality?” in The Rise of Ancient Israel: Symposium at the Smithsonian Institution, October 26, 1991 (ed. H. Shanks; Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992). For a current anthology of the research done on the Exodus tradition, see Stephen C. Russell, Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature: Cisjordan-Israelite, Transjordan-Israelite, and Judahite Portrayals (Berline: de Gruyter, 2009), 1-14. He argues for over 160 references to the exodus in biblical literature.

\(^{186}\) See Frank M. Cross, Jr. and David N. Freedman, “The Song of Miriam,” JNES 14 (1955): 237-50, for a detailed analysis of the archaic language in the song and how this vocabulary pertains to the Late Bronze Age. Also, Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 124. The most thorough linguistic study of this text was done by Robertson, Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry, 153-56. See further, David N. Freedman, “Strophe and Meter in Exodus 15,” in A light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Meyers (ed. H. N. Bream et al.; Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1974). Trent C. Butler lists forty-eight proposals for the date of the song in, 'The Song of the Sea': Exodus 15:1-18: A Study in the Exegesis of Hebrew Poetry (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1971), 57-58. I have listed some of these proposals, but have updated the scholarship until present day using a summary by Russell in, Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature, 133-138. Some of these proposals include an early date due to comparison with Ugairti Poetry of the 12th century B.C.E. (Frank M. Cross, William F. Albright, Brian D. Russell), Pre-monarchic (Baruch Halpern), Early Monarchy (Sigmund Mowinckel, Samuel E. Loewenstamm, Ronald E. Clements, Carol L. Meyers), language affinities with the major prophets of the late pre-exilic period (Jasper J. Burden), various themes and language in the song are a product of the Deuteronomist (Raymond J. Tournay), or possibly a late date (Alan H. McNeile, Martin Brenner, Rudiger Bartelmus).
examined this poem and have argued for various dates, but the general consensus is that this is one of the oldest sections of the Hebrew Bible. In this song, YHWH is depicted as a warrior (vs. 3), a storm-god (vs. 1, 4-10), a deliverer (vs. 1-2, 13), and a planter of the people (vs. 17). These are some of the earliest images of the divine and so it is not surprising that other early poems draw on many of these same themes.

Exodus 15:1-18

1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to YHWH: I will sing to YHWH, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. 2 YHWH is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God and I will exalt him.

3 YHWH is a warrior; YHWH is his name. 4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea. 5 The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. 6 Your right hand, O YHWH, glorious in power—your right hand, O YHWH, shattered the enemy.

7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you set out your fury, it consumed them like stubble. 8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will

10 pursue YHWH’s people, because of his enthroned one, the Holy One of Israel.

11 ‘But YHWH is enthroned as at old, he is exalted in Jacob’s1 day.

12 The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake my people, I will capture the remnant of my foes.

13 But they stumbled over their own feet, they became tangled in the nets they devised. 14 Their own脚steps caught them; their own face turned back, and they fell.

15 For YHWH is a God of wisdom; the Lord is wise beyond human understanding.

16 The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake YHWH’s people, because of his enthroned one, the Holy One of Israel.

17 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to YHWH: I will sing to YHWH, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. 18 YHWH is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God and I will exalt him.
The song’s early dating is further supported by its comparison with other ancient Near Eastern mythic texts. Bernard F. Batto argues that Exodus 15 exhibits, “the same basic structure as Enuma Elish and the Ugaritic Baal Cycle. The Divine Warrior overcomes his watery foe of chaos, creating a new order in the process…The Divine Warrior then retires to his mountain sanctuary, from where he eternally rules his newly ordered cosmos.”\(^\text{187}\) William H. C. Propp notes that the overall structure of Exod 15:1b-18, “mirrors cosmic architecture. The Song begins in the Sea’s depth (vv. 1-10), where Yahweh’s drowned enemies lie in the underworld (v. 12). It ends on a mountaintop sanctum, from which Yahweh reigns forever.”\(^\text{188}\) Yahweh’s victory over the Sea is monumental to the identity of a people with Mesopotamian roots.

In the late second millennium B.C.E. scribal schools were prominent throughout Mesopotamia and the transmission of various creation myths would have been accessible to surrounding areas.\(^\text{189}\) The ancient Israelites were aware of these mythic prototypes and

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so YHWH inherited many of these same attributes. Just as Baal desired to build a temple once he defeated Yam, so too YHWH speaks of his sanctuary upon defeat of Pharaoh and the Sea. The themes incorporated in this song are ancient and clearly resonate the borrowing of specific motifs from other Mesopotamian cultures. Michael Fishbane divides ancient Near Eastern mythic prototypes into two thematic categories:

The first of these features involves reference to a paradigmatic divine action-specifically, to a divine battle (theomachy) against the sea (as a natural and often personified element), adduced or evoked in conjunction with the origin of the world or subsequent acts of divine power. The second focuses on the divine personalities themselves, who provide sustenance, protection, or military assistance to their faithful human subjects, and who may be coaxed and praised for these benefits—but who may also withdraw their favour or abandon their worshippers or shrines in moments of wrath. If the sea battle is one of the most common and dramatic mythologems in ancient Near Eastern literature, the relationship between worshippers and their gods has been identified as a common religious pattern throughout the region.190

The Song of the Sea incorporates both thematic elements: the divine battle as well as the divine relationship. After the warrior subdued the Yam, he chose a specific group of people and ‘planted’ them on his mountainous residence (v. 17). Horticulture metaphors are one of the dominant metaphors for the divine/human relationship in the Hebrew Literature. The people as plants/vines will be the focus of the subsequent four chapters. However, it is noteworthy that the Song of the Sea reflects two of the arching themes of ancient Near Eastern literature.

Not only is the thematic structure of this song similar to ancient Near Eastern texts, but the language can also be attributed to early Canaanite poetry. Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman have argued that the “language of Exodus 15 is more consistently archaic than that of any other prose or poetic work of some length in the

Bible. The poem conforms throughout to the prosodic patterns and canons of the Late Bronze Age."191 Numerous studies have examined the language, parallelism, and mixed meter of this song.192 It has been compared to poetry throughout the Hebrew Bible and to poetry throughout Mesopotamia. There are many archaisms in this poetical unit and so the song is typically compared with the poetry of the Baal myth of the eleventh century B.C.E. A precise date for this song may never be known, but it is suffice to say that the archaisms in the text point to an early date.

Due to the highly significant content of this composition, the Song of the Sea became a collective memory for the Israelite community. This piece of literature became one of the, “quintessential expressions of the community’s traditional story,” which is to say, it became an “authentic myth” for the Israelite community.193 The song’s importance resonates throughout the Hebrew Bible due to its importance as a foundational mode of discourse for the people. Alan Confino argues that the song functions as, “an exploration of a shared identity that unites a social group, be it a family or a nation, whose members nonetheless have different interests and motivations.”194 This is a song of commemoration, but more importantly, it serves as a collective memory of a merging nation. Allusions to the song can be found throughout the Hebrew Bible

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191 See Cross and Freedman, “The Song of Miriam,” for a detailed analysis of the archaic language in the song and how this vocabulary pertains to the Late Bronze Age.


193 Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 16.

because it served as a source of identity to a group of tribes aiming to unite under a shared faith.  

For the purposes of this study, the song’s reference to the divine as a planter of the people (v. 17) will be examined as a motif in biblical literature. The storm-god YHWH was in control of the rainfall, the floodwaters, and plant life. Yet, he was also associated metaphorically as the planter of the people. Many ancient Near Eastern traditions depict the divine metaphorically as a planter of the people (see chapter 4.5). In the Hebrew Bible, the Israelite people become associated with plant imagery, vine imagery in particular. Exodus 15:17 is one of the earliest known references to this metaphorical depiction in the biblical literature. The image of the people as YHWH’s choice planting becomes a portraiture of the divine/human relationship throughout much of prophetic literature. The predominantly agrarian setting of the Fertile Crescent contributed to the development of this particular metaphor, which was inherited and developed by biblical authors in their own literature.

3.4.6 Conclusion of Early Poetry

Ancient Near Eastern mythical texts depict deities in language cased in localized metaphors from the natural landscape. Since agriculture became the mainstay of these civilizations by the third millennium B.C.E., powerful storm-gods emerged as the representatives of the abundant harvest and the destructive storms. In many early Hebrew poems, the language of the theophany of the divine warrior and the theophany of

\[195 \text{Cf. 2 Sam 7:10; Pss 77:13-20; Isa 51:10}\]
the divine storm-god exhibit similar mythical language.\textsuperscript{196} YHWH evolved as a warrior and storm-god, an avenger and a planter. Psalm 29, Judges 5, Deuteronomy 32, Habakkuk 3, and Exodus 15 are five early texts that characterize YHWH as both a divine warrior and a storm-god. These images became the basis for YHWH’s characterization in the biblical text and so it is hardly surprising that many of these metaphors are reiterated throughout the Hebrew Bible. As a storm-god he was responsible for the fructification of nature and as a divine warrior he was responsible for keeping chaotic forces at bay. In this way, YHWH became “the consummate mythical storm-god warrior.”\textsuperscript{197}

Even though YHWH shares many characteristics with ancient Near Eastern storm-gods and Baal in particular, there is not a direct correlation between YHWH and Baal. The viscous cycle of calamities that Baal faces are not evident in biblical descriptions of YHWH’s destiny. Unlike Baal, the biblical texts never depict YHWH defeated or afraid. Furthermore, he is never killed or physically harmed, whereas Green maintains that Baal may have been “conceived of as a dying and rising god.”\textsuperscript{198} Yet, there are enough similarities to speak of a clear line of continuity between ancient Israelite depictions of YHWH and ancient Near Eastern traditions.

\textsuperscript{196} See Cross, \textit{Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic}, 86.

\textsuperscript{197} Green, \textit{Storm God in the Ancient Near East}, 265.

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 280.
3.5 Conclusion

In the earliest stratum of Israelite tradition, YHWH resembles the characterization of storm-gods in ancient Mesopotamia and Syria. He is also displayed as a powerful warrior, armed and ready to avenge injustice. These images were gleaned for the landscape and from the everyday experiences of the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia and the Levant. In this way, metaphor became the dominant mode of transmission of the divine persona.

The main focus of this study is to examine one aspect of the divine: the divine as planter of the people. The Hebrew Bible is saturated with horticulture metaphors, where YHWH is the planter and the people are the plants/vines. Just as early poetry portrays the divine as both a storm-god and warrior, the planting metaphor follows a similar pattern. As a storm-god, YHWH is the skilled gardener who plants and cultivates a choice vine, his chosen people. As a warrior, he is the up-rooter and destroyer of his choice planting. Interestingly, the history of ancient Israel and planting metaphors move along parallel trajectories. When the people have divine favor they are a luxuriant plant. When YHWH is displeased with the people, however, their fate is turned over to the wrath of the divine warrior. Thus, the mythological features associating YHWH with the storm-god and divine warrior, persists in the metaphorical discourse.

The plant metaphor resonates throughout biblical literature, yet it is not a motif found in the Bible alone. After surveying ancient Near Eastern literature, there is also a clear association between storm-gods and plant imagery. Some cosmogonic myths from the Sumerian and Persian cultures even depict the autochthonous origin of mankind. An
analysis of these sources will provide the background for the biblical concept of the
nation of Israel as a plant and YHWH as the planter.
Chapter Four

The Ancient Near Eastern Background to YHWH as Planter

4.1 Introduction

The ancient Israelites were part of a cultural climate that acknowledged the divine’s presence in nature. The reliance on agriculture for survival facilitated the emergence of powerful storm-gods across ancient Mesopotamia, which influenced the persona of the Hebrew god, YHWH. The amount of rainfall determined the success or failure of the yearly harvest. Depictions of storm-gods and their attributes materialized in the iconographic and literary sources in response to these agrarian concerns.

The cognitive linguist, Raymond Gibbs Jr. argues that, “an understanding of the social context is crucial to understanding the development of a literary metaphor.”199 Metaphors are conceived from familiar objects, such as the natural environment or daily experiences. Therefore, the recognition that horticultural crop production was the activity that consumed most peoples’ waking hours in ancient society is essential to understanding the metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE.

This chapter will discuss the relationship between divinity and plant imagery. Near Eastern mythological texts chronicle many of the activities and interests of the patron deities. These gods typically lived in temples on cosmic mountains, which contained lavish gardens. The iconographic sources confirm that agricultural concerns were part of their varied repertoire. The close affinity between the agricultural calendar and divine favor led to the metaphorical depiction of the deity as a planter of not only

plants, but people as well. Several Sumerian, Ugaritic, and Persian creation stories depict the evolution of man comparable to plant growth, a seed sprouting from the earth. The image of YHWH as the planter and the people as the plant becomes a vivid image in biblical literature. This chapter will discuss the development of planting imagery in the ancient Near Eastern and biblical literature, as well as introduce the importance of viticulture to the Levant.

4.2 Storm-gods and Plant Imagery

The notion of divinity associated with planting, notably a tree, is not foreign to Near Eastern iconography. For example, in a list of ancient Babylonian gods, Marduk is ascribed as a god of planting, as well as being given other attributes.²⁰⁰ His traditional symbol was ‘the spade,’ so it is likely that he was associated with agriculture.²⁰¹ Furthermore, scenes depicting gods watering plants or self-pollinating are another noticeable aspect of near eastern art.


According to Pauline Albenda, “the desire for fertility and growth of crops in the land is most probably the meaning behind the watering of small potted trees by such early Mesopotamian rulers as Ur-Nammu, who is shown performing the ritual before enthroned deities on his stele” (see Illustration 3). The watering of plants and sacred trees by deities have survived in various forms in the iconographic evidence and contribute to the textual sources depicting various gods as inherently interested in agriculture.

The “tree scene” in Assyrian art was a significant motif, especially among wall carvings from the palace of King Assurnasirpal II (ca. 867 B.C.E.). After surveying King Assurnasirpal II’s palace, Barbara Porter concluded that numerous scenes depict

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203 The tree scene was depicted ninety-six times in Room I of the palace and countless other times in seals and other wall carvings. See Barbara Fleuling Porter, Trees, Kings, and Politics: Studies in Assyrian Iconography (OBO 197; Fribourg: Academic, 2003), 11-20, for a detailed analysis of the tree scene motif in Assyrian art.
“two winged figures, sometimes with birds’ heads and sometimes with the heads of men and the horned hats of god. Each of the winged figures holds a bucket and reaches out with an oval object toward a stylized tree-like object between them” (see Illustration 4).²⁰⁴

![Illustration 4: Winged, bird-headed deities and tree image (King Assurnasirpal II’s Palace).](image)

Scholars have argued for various interpretations of these scenes and there are still debates regarding which species of tree these images represent, but there is a general consensus that these scenes depict a cultic fertility rite of some sort. Barbara Porter argues:

This scene, for all its links to real agriculture, is in its essence an emblem, representing the gods’ gift to mankind of abundant crops and, by extension, of the security agricultural success provides. When the winged figure reaches out with his oval flower cluster toward the figure of the king, he is thus not literally pollinating the king but rather, metaphorically bestowing on him abundance and security as a gift from the gods—a meaning that would have been easily grasped from the picture because it represented an agricultural process whose consequences were well understood.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 24.
²⁰⁵ Ibid., 16-17.
With the gods’ help, the Assyrian king was able to provide abundance to his people. The scene depicted above would have been the first thing a visitor would have seen who visited the throne room and pictures of the tree scene were found all over the palace walls. The winged divine creatures are not ordinary farmers, but rather hand pollinated the tree to ensure the success of the agricultural cycle of the Assyrian people. The Assyrian gods and the king himself clearly played a prominent role in the success of the agricultural cycle and the success of the land.

There are also a few iconographic sources that depict the deity enshrouded in a plant and not merely pollinating or watering a plant. For example, the deity Santas is carved into the hillside at Ivriz in the Taurus Mountains with large vines twisted around his torso and he holds ears of grain in his outstretched hands. There are also streams of water flowing from his hands (see Illustration 5). A contemporary of Tiglath Pileser III (744-727 B.C.E.), King Urballa of Tyana, stands next to the deity with both hands upraised in the traditional Anatolian gesture of prayer. Iconographic representations of Near Eastern gods rarely portray grape vines, especially in a religious context such as this one. Interestingly, viticulture is thought to have originated in Anatolia, so the use of grape vines may reflect that predominance of viticulture in this area (see chapter 5.3).
According to Pauline Albenda, this deity decorated with thriving plants, “reflects a later version of fertility gods depicted in the Near East as early as the third millennium B.C.E., during the Akkad Dynasty.”\textsuperscript{206} The increasing interest in viticulture in the first millennium B.C.E. may have contributed to the use of vines and grape clusters on this stela.

The textual evidence shows a direct link between the deities and storm-gods in particular, and control over agriculture. These gods were believed to have great influence over the agricultural cycle and the climate of their respective areas. The iconographic evidence supplants the textual evidence and confirms this motif in ancient thought. Thus, iconographic studies can be another useful tool in metaphor interpretation. The image of Baal with a plant-like spear or Near Eastern gods watering plants becomes a material

\textsuperscript{206} Albenda, “Grapevines in Ashurbanipal’s Garden,” 10.
image of the planting metaphor. According to Martin Kingbeil, “verbal, mental, and material image are sub-domains that draw from the same domain…literary and literal image can rightfully be related to each other.”²⁰⁷ In this way, iconographic imagery and textual metaphor can work simultaneously to illuminate ancient thought and ideology.

4.3 Ancient Near Eastern Temple Gardens

Not only were several ancient Near Eastern deities associated with land cultivation, but their temples were often accompanied by lavish gardens as well.²⁰⁸ Stephanie Dalley argues that, “the Babylonians and Assyrians planted gardens in cities, palace courtyards, and temples, in which trees with fragrance and edible fruits were prominent for re-creating their concept of Paradise.”²⁰⁹ The primary early references to cultic or holy gardens in Babylonia are to, “Inanna taking the huluppu-tree” to her temple garden in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.²¹⁰ Also in the Gilgamesh tradition, the cedar forest of Lebanon is referred to as a divine abode, the god’s plantation.²¹¹ In Egypt, the Helipolitan sun temple was landscaped.


²⁰⁸ For an exhaustive analysis of the significance of gardens in the ancient Near East, see Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 81-161.


²¹⁰ See A. Shafer, “Sumerian Sources of Tablet XII of the Epic of Gilgamesh” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 1963), 30.

Sennacherib imported plants into his garden at his palace at Nineveh. He planted this garden on a hill and he used local and imported plants.\(^\text{212}\) He also built a temple at Assur within a garden setting and made this the location of the New Year Festival.

Stephanie Dalley argues that Sennacherib’s garden “may have been the place where the king, representing the god, performed the ritual marriage ceremony with a priestess.” Dalley postulates that because we have evidence of love lyrics depicting love making within gardens, that this ritual ceremony could have also taken place in Sennacherib’s garden. For instance, the lyrics of Nabu (god of wisdom) and his spouse, Tashmetu, describe a love-making scene within a garden:

‘Let me go into the garden, into the garden to my lord. May my eyes see the plucking of your fruit, may my ears hear the song of your birds…Bind your days to the garden and to the Lord!  Bind your nights to the beautiful garden.’\(^\text{213}\)

Autumn was the traditional time of vineyard festivals and wedding celebrations. The grape harvest initiated these festivities and so it is also plausible that the king performed a ritual marriage ceremony at this time as well.

The remains of elaborate gardens have been excavated in Syro-Palestine as well. King Solomon mentions his gardens and vineyards in Qoh 2:4-6. According to the book of Nehemiah, the King’s garden was located close to the city gates (Neh 3:15), but not within the temple complex. The association of a garden with a temple is depicted negatively in ancient Israel, probably due to its association with fertility rites (Isa 1:29; 212 See Albenda, “Grapevines in Ashurbanipal’s Garden,” 6.

\(^{213}\) Translation taken from Alasgair Livingstone, Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea (State Archives of Assyria III; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1987), no.16 (SU 52/233).
Even though there may not have been gardens within the temple complex at Jerusalem, the temple itself was decorated with images of palm trees, gourds, and open flowers (1 Kgs 6:18, 29). Carvings of the natural world were carved on the walls of the temple and even the inner sanctuary was decorated with beautiful open flowers and palm trees. Images from the plant world served as the décor for YHWH’s dwelling creating a garden-like oasis.

Gardens were a significant aspect of Ancient Near East monumental architecture. Furthermore, gardens and planting imagery were prominent features of the temple architecture and the cultic role of the gods as well. Exod 15:17 mentions that YHWH planted his people on “the mountain of your own possession.” The association of gods with mountain sanctuaries is another important aspect of ancient Near Eastern divination, especially among those known as storm-gods.

4.4 The Cosmic Mountain

Mircea Eliade, after researching mythic illustrations from numerous world religions, concluded that mountains and trees were often a symbolic representation of the location where heaven and earth meet. These locations became known as “the center of the world,” and were held in the highest regards by ancient societies. Richard J. Clifford wrote his doctoral dissertation on the cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament. He concluded that:

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In the ancient civilizations from Egypt to India and beyond, the mountain can be a center of fertility, the primeval hillock of creation, the meeting place of the gods, the swelling place of the high god, the meeting place of heaven and earth, the monument effectively upholding the order of creation, the place where god meets man, a place of theophany.\textsuperscript{216}

Since mountains are closer to the heavens, these locations were often revered as holy places.

In Egypt, almost all sanctuaries claimed to contain the site of the primeval hill, which had first emerged from the floods of Chaos.\textsuperscript{217} Mesopotamian temples were also linked to primordial beginnings. According to the \textit{Enuma Elish}, the temple Esagila was built after Marduk defeated Tiamat and was known as the foundation of heaven and earth. This ‘cosmic center’ was considered a place where multiple spheres of the cosmos intersected. After surveying a number of ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite texts, Clifford argues that mountains were, “set apart because of a divine presence or activity which relates to the world of man-ordering or stabilizing that world, acting upon it through natural forces, the point where the earth touches the divine sphere.”\textsuperscript{218}

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that most divine abodes in the ancient Near East were situated on mountaintops accompanied by lavish gardens.

Since the building of temples was a costly endeavor, the veneration of a particular deity with a temple signified their status within a particular community. Pauline Albenda observed that the, “studies of the physical remains of many cities in the region and the history of Mesopotamian gods from prehistoric through the Early Dynastic times have


\textsuperscript{217} Keel, \textit{Symbolism of the Biblical World}, 113.

\textsuperscript{218} Clifford, \textit{Cosmic Mountain}, 7-8.
shown that each community had its own temple in which a particular god was worshiped.”

For example, we know from the Ugaritic literature, that gods had their own plots of land. In the early sections of the Baal Cycle, Baal becomes upset because he was not given his own mountain to build a palace. El eventually gives Baal permission to build a home and he chooses Mt. Zaphon (Sapan) as his dwelling place.

Come and I will reveal it
In the midst of my mountain,
Divine Sapan,
On the holy mount of my heritage,
On the beautiful hill of (my) might.

The Baal Cycle describes Baal’s palace in some detail and most of the architectural descriptions match those of a king’s palace. However, there are some instances where the celestial nature of the temple is revealed. For instance, the text describes Baal’s palace as eight stories high and consisting of “gold-edged clouds.” Baal’s desire for a temple palace highlights the storm-god’s struggle for supremacy in the Ugaritic pantheon.

There are many passages in the Hebrew Bible that also depict YHWH as a mountain god. For example, Mt.Sinai/Horeb, the place where the torah was given to Moses, is sometimes called ‘the mountain.’ Exodus 15:17 describes YHWH’s

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220 See KTU 3.2.4.6

221 KTU 1.4:V-VI.


223 Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 108.
mountain as a place of his own creation and the exact location where he planted the nation of Israel. Frank Moore Cross (and many others) have argued for the striking similarities between the language in this verse and KTU 1.3 iii: 28-31: “the mount of my heritage.” Just as Baal claimed Mt. Zaphon as his marked territory, YHWH is also depicted as having his own mountain sanctuary as well.

Some scholars have assumed that because this text refers to a specific mountain and sanctuary, that the writer must be aware of Mt. Zion and the Solomonic Temple. Yet, it was not uncommon to find sanctuaries commemorating ancient Near Eastern deities on mountaintops long before the Solomonic era. In Mesopotamia, as in Egypt, “every temple has its du-ku, its ‘pure hill.’ The primeval hill substantiated the claim particular temples and cities to antedate all other holy places. The creator-god made his appearance on the primeval hill; the ordered world had its origins from it.” As we have seen from the previous survey, many prominent near eastern deities had sanctuaries on mountaintops. Exodus 15 refers to Yahweh’s mountain and sanctuary, the place where he planted the people.

The mountaintop sanctuary was not only a reflection of the cosmogony of a culture, but it also symbolized the supremacy of the deity over the forces of chaos. It was from these mountain sanctuaries that the storm-god orchestrated the agricultural cycle and according to some traditions, planted the people like the grass of the fields.

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224 Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 142-143.

225 Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 139-42, for an analysis of the possible locations for the mountain discussed in Exod 15:17.

4.5 Ancient Near Eastern Descriptions of Gods “Planting” People

4.5.1 Introduction

The iconographic and textual evidence from the ancient Near East clearly depicts a correlation between divinity and the agricultural cycle. In particular, storm-gods were known for their involvement in agriculture production and control over the level of winter rains. These gods planted lush gardens and subdued the waters of chaos, but some were also depicted metaphorically as planters of the people. For example, Sumerian and Persian creation myths describe the autochthonous origin of mankind. There are also a few passages in biblical literature that illustrate man’s origins as sprouting from the earth.

4.5.2 Sumerian Literature

The Sumerian literature describes two different versions of the creation of man. In one account, man is created from clay and this tradition is continued in Akkadian literature. This becomes the dominant image of man’s origins in most ancient Near Eastern cultures. The creation of man from clay is preserved in the biblical literature in Gen 2:6-7. In the other Sumerian creation account, man sprouts up from the ground like grass. According to Tikva Frymer-Kensy, “this concept did not play a major role in Babylonian religion, possibly because it was associated with An and Enlil rather than Enki.”

Remember, Enlil was the ancient Mesopotamian storm-god who was associated with making the vines grow (see chapter 3.3.1). He was also responsible for

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228 There are more Enki stories in the Babylonian mythology than Enlil stories. Enki stories are typically associated with the first account of creation with clay.
“herding-together the thick rain clouds” and determined the amount of rain that fell each year in Mesopotamia. Enlil is the earliest-known storm-god that is recorded in the preserved literature.

There are two Sumerian sources that highlight the creation of man as the product of being planted in the ground. The first source comes from the introduction to the hymn to the E-Engur, the temple of Enki at Eridu:

when destinies had been established for all engendered things,
when An had engendered the year of abundance
when people had broken through the ground like plants. \(^{229}\)

The second source for this tradition comes from the “Creation of the Pickaxe.” \(^{230}\)

Enlil, in order to cause the seed of the land to arise from the earth,
Hastened to separate heaven from earth,
Hastened to separate heaven from earth.
In order that the “flesh-producer” might produce the vanguard (of man)
He bound up the gash in Duranki (the bond of heaven and earth).
Placing the “vanguard of man” in the “flesh-producer” with the pickaxe,
He placed the vanguard of mankind into the mold
Toward Enlil (the people) of his land sprouted up through the ground. \(^{231}\)

This is not an easily understood text, but the description of Enlil ‘planting’ the seed of the people in the ground is apparent in these texts. According to Thorkild Jacobsen, “Enlil with his pickax breaks the hard top crust of the earth which has thus far prevented the first men, developed below, from sprouting forth just as such a crust will often prevent


\(^{231}\) Translation taken from Frymer-Kensky, “The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery, 131.”
germinating plants from breaking through.”\textsuperscript{232} The place where this sprouting occurred was at the center of the temple of Inanna in Nippur. Clifford explains that, “the reason for the sacred character of the place is that in primeval times the earth produced mankind there.”\textsuperscript{233} Jacobsen maintains that that this location was also known as Dur-an-ki “the bond of Heaven and Earth.”\textsuperscript{234} Thus, the mountain where the temple stood was also the site of the creation of the society.

Tikva Frymer-Kensky also points out that, “the ‘seed of the land’ is ultimately related to ‘mother earth’ and to the relationship between human sexuality and the earth’s fertility, which is so important to pagan religions. The female, like the earth, is ‘ploughed’ by the farmer and ‘planted’ with ‘seed.’”\textsuperscript{235} The farmer in this instance is the Sumerian god, Enlil, who worked tirelessly to separate the heavens and the earth, so that the ground could be ploughed for the first humans to sprout forth from like plants.

The primary ancient Sumerian creation account depicts the origin of man from clay, similar to Akkadian and biblical origin stories. However, there is also a strain of Sumerian cosmogony that equates human evolution with agriculture. In this myth, man sprouted from the earth just as plants sprout from the earth. Thus, terminology from horticulture such as ‘seed’ and ‘breaking through’ became the basis for comprehending human conception as well.


\textsuperscript{233} Clifford, \textit{Cosmic Mountain}, 14.

\textsuperscript{234} Jacobsen, “Sumerian Myth: A Review Article,” 137.

\textsuperscript{235} Frymer-Kensky, “The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery, 130.”
4.5.3 Ugaritic Literature

The idea that the gods “planted” the seed of man in the ground is an image that is not unique to ancient Sumeria. According to the Baal Cycle, ‘Anatu is invited to put her ‘love-fruit’ into the ground. The word ‘love fruit’ [ddym] also occurs in Hebrew [דְּדִית]. Korpel identifies this term as ‘the mandrake.’ The mandrake was a plant used in ancient societies as an aphrodisiac to stimulate fertility. De moor concludes from this text in the Baal cycle that, “the earth represents a woman who must be impregnated by rains and seed-ploughing before she can bring forth the crop. Thus, it would seem that the act of putting the fruit of the mandrake into the earth is a rite to stimulate the fertility of Mother Earth.” This act may also be connected to the autumn agricultural cycle and the ploughing of the land after the fall rains.

The goddess ‘Anatu is also designated by two epithets describing her as the embodiment of fertility, namely ‘breast [td] of the Nations’ and ‘Womb’ [rhm]. As she was the consort of the great storm-god Baal, it is noteworthy that she was involved in planting and possibly also contributed to an early idea of gods/goddesses as planters of the people.

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236 KTU 1.3:III.15 par.
237 See Korpel, Rift in the Clouds, 433.
238 Gustaf Dalman, Arbeit Und Sitte in Palästina (vol. 1/1; Band; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1928), 250f.
4.5.4 Persian Literature

The Zoroastrian creation myth specifies that the world was created in seven days and humanity began with a single individual named Gayomard. Upon his death, Gayomard emitted a seed that produced the first male and female pair, Masya and Masyani. The Greater (Iranian) Bundahisn, a collection of stories pertaining to Zoroastrian cosmogony, describes the first human pair as sprouting from the ground as a rhubarb plant.

When Gayomard emitted the seed whilst passing away, they-filtered the seed by means of the light of the Sun. On the completion of forty years, Masya and Masyani grew up for the earth in the astral-body of a ‘rivas’ plant having one stem of fifteen leaves… Then both of them changed from the astral-body of a plant into the astral-body of a man, and that light, which is the soul, entered spiritually into them, that is, verily, they had grown up in the semblance of a tree, whose fruit was the ten races of mankind. He Ohrmazd spoke to Masya and Masyani: ‘You are the seed of man, you are the parents of the world (IV: 5-6, 10-11).’

Masya and Masyani grew as identical plants in height and appearance until they were changed into human form. From this first human pair, six sets of twins were born that eventually populated the earth. This literature clearly portrays the autochthonous origin of the first human pair and plants are highlighted as the vessel for their evolution.

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242 The Bundahisn (“Creation”) was redacted during the first millennium C.E. (Sasanian Period), but the content is thought to be much older. According to the Zoroastrian scholar Mary Boyce, “here is preserved an ancient, in part pre-Zoroastrian picture of the world, a world girdled by two great rivers, from which all other waters flow; in which yearly the gods fight against the demons to end drought and famine, and to bring protection to man.” *History of Zoroastrianism, The Early Period* (HdO: The Near and Middle East 8/1; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 40.

243 Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria, trans., *Zand-Akasih: Iranian or Greater Bundahisn* (Bombay: Published for the Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha by its Honorary Secretary Dastur Framroze A. Bode, 1956), 127-129.
4.5.5 Conclusion to Gods “planting” People

The rise of agriculture in the Near East in the third millennium B.C.E. led to a preoccupation with plant life. As horticulture grew in stature, storm-gods became prominent deities in the agrarian worldview. Thus, storm imagery and divine involvement in the harvest cycle began to emerge as a theme in the literature. A few Sumerian, Ugaritic, and Persian sources even relate the creation of humans following the same pattern as the sprouting of a plant. Since metaphor was one of the primary methods of describing these powerful deities, the divine/human relationship began to adopt metaphorical imagery as well. The divine/human relationship in the Hebrew Bible is also represented in plant imagery, a planting with roots in a particular plot of land.

4.6 Biblical Planting Evidence

The first image of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible is that of a creator. In Gen 1, the world is created and in Gen 2, the creator plants a beautiful garden:

Then YHWH God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And YHWH God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground YHWH God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:7-9).

This garden was a special place and there are references in this story to God walking around in the garden “in the cool of the day.” Clearly, this was more than just a place for the first humans, it was also a place of comfort for the creator. Serenity,
tranquility, and peace are all images that resonate from the description of this garden, an oasis of paradise. The “formless and void” earth was re-fashioned by the Creator and in its place a beautiful garden was planted as an idyllic habitat.

In just a few verses YHWH is depicted as the creator of man, the planter of all vegetation on earth, the architect of a lavish garden, and there are references to sacred trees within this garden. The combinations of these images of the divine should not be surprising given the emphasis on agricultural productivity among the ancient Near Eastern storm-gods. Even the iconographic sources depict ancient Near Eastern deities near sacred trees within gardens, while maintaining complete control over the agricultural calendar. It is interesting to note, however, that YHWH formed man from the “dust of the earth” in this context. The creation from the dust of the earth follows the Mesopotamian creation motif and this becomes the biblical picture of creation of man as well.

The second time the biblical text mentions God “planting” is in Exod 15:17, the Song of the Sea:

תבאמו ותרשמו בחר נחלתם مكان לשבותך מעלה יוהו י子どוי אصنع

You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your possession, the fixed place of your dwelling that you made, O YHWH, the sanctuary, O YHWH, that your hands have established.  

Here, the reference to planting is attributed to the people of Israel and God is acknowledged for “planting them on his mountain.” The divine’s resting place was chosen as the location for a people with whom he has made a covenant. This image of

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244 Translation is my own.
YHWH literally planting the people of Israel became a powerful symbol in biblical literature, especially among the prophetic oracles.

Scholars have long recognized the connection between the creation of the world in Genesis 1-2 and the creation of the people of God at Sinai in Exodus 14-15. In each creation account, YHWH maintains his sovereignty over the powers of chaos. The threat of the world returning to a primordial tumult was a valid concern to these ancient societies. Bernard F. Batto argues that ‘chaos’ consisted of two equally powerful forces; “One was the primeval flood or ocean, frequently portrayed as a dragon-like monster; the other was the barren desert.” In the Genesis creation account, there was no vegetation on the ground until God planted. Furthermore, there was no control over the primordial waters until God set specific boundaries for the “waters above and waters below.” Finally, creation culminated with God’s rest.

The Song of the Sea follows similar motifs. YHWH not only subdued the dragon-like monster of Pharaoh and his army, but he also planted the people Israel on a cosmic mountain. According to the biblical text, this song was sung in the desert. By acknowledging YHWH as a “gardener” in a wasteland, images of creation are evoked once again. Finally, just as in the creation of the world, there is a reference in Exod 15:17 to YHWH’s place of rest. As a people of YHWH, they are given the privilege to be planted on the same mountain where he resides. The connections between these two myths are unmistakable and they are each tied to the notion of Yahweh as a gardener who “plants” as part of his creation.

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245 Batto, Slaying the Dragon, 47.
There are many references in the biblical text to people as plants or people like grass, but mainly it is the nation of Israel that is compared to a plant/vine. Frymer-Kensky correctly observes that, “the plant image becomes a very important way in which Israel expresses its history, the way God tended it, planted it, will destroy it, and will then replant it.” The image of the nation of Israel as a seed or a vine that was planted by the divine and grew from the earth originates in Exodus 15, yet this metaphor inspired many other biblical authors as well. The prophetic literature draws heavily on the metaphor of the people as plants, but more specifically, vines among the vineyard (see Appendix 1 for a list of specific references where YHWH literally “plants” the people or mentions Israel as a vine/shoot). This image becomes a visual indicator of the health of the divine/human relationship.

The creation account in Genesis 1 specifies that man was created from the dust of the earth, yet the creation of the nation of Israel occurred on a cosmic mountain and the people were the fruit of his planting, the carefully tended vine of a master vintner. Jacob’s dream in Gen 28:10-22 foreshadows this idea of the people of Israel. In this text, the descendants of Jacob are promised a particular land where there will be blessings for all:

וְהָיָה וּרְאוּתֵךְ בְּפָרָם חֵפָרַת יְהוָה וּכְפַרַת הָעָם שָׁפָרָה וּמָצַרְתָּ בַּצַּדְקָה וּתוֹסֶפת בַּתְּפִלָּה וּמְשַׁמֵּחָה וּמְשַׁמֵּחָה וַעֲשָׂרִים וַעֲשָׂרִים
כִּלֶּכֶת מְשַׁמֵּחָה וּמְשַׁמֵּחָה וּמְשַׁמֵּחָה וַעֲשָׂרִים וַעֲשָׂרִים

Your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread to the west and to the east and to the north, and to the south. And by you and by your seed shall all the families of the earth find blessing (Gen 28:14).

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The Hebrew word "زراعة", "offspring/seed" also means "a sowing" or a "seed sown to raise crops." The picture here of Jacob’s seed sprouting up all over the land conjures images of vegetation and an abundant crop which will eventually be planted on God’s holy mountain in Exod 15:17.

Jeremiah 31:27 echoes the depiction of the people as seeds found in Gen 28:14, but the setting is quite different. In this passage, the prophet envisions a new creation of the people, but this new creation will take place once they have returned from exile:

הנה ימים אמרהו והפרת אום במתה יסראל
את־ברית יהודה ואת אום והעד הכהה:

The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals.

The houses of Israel and Judah are both mentioned as part of this sowing, possibly referring to a unified Israel once again. The people will be sown into the land, similar to planting a seed in the ground. Furthermore, Psalm 139:13-15 juxtaposes creation from the mother’s womb with creation from the depths of the earth. Creation from within the earth is not as popular as creation from dust/clay, but both creation accounts involve soil as their primary medium.

The creation of man from the dust of the earth is the predominant creation story in the Hebrew Bible. Job 33:6 draws on this tradition: “I too was formed from a piece of clay.” There are also traces of the origin of man from a seed, but these examples depict the metaphorical planting of man in the land, similar to Exod 15:17. YHWH is the master planter both metaphorically and literally. He plants a lush garden in Genesis 2, he promises the planting of a people in Genesis 28, he plants the people in Exodus 15, and
he promises to re-plant the people in Jeremiah 31 and other post-exilic texts. Thus, the
people as a planting of YHWH, remains a persistent motif in biblical litrature

4.7 The Metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE

We know from other ancient Near Eastern mythologies, such as the Baal Cycle, that metaphor was an intentional method of interpretation. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that metaphor became a dominant mode of expression in the biblical text as well. According to Macky, “many metaphors that were once novel were used over and over again in the biblical tradition.” The metaphorical depiction of the people as plants became a persistent and readily available image drawn from the local landscape.

The metaphor of YHWH as the planter or more specifically, the vintner of the nation of Israel has its roots in ancient Near Eastern storm-god mythology as well as early depictions of the divine in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew god as a gardener is an early view of Yahwism, yet remains a consistent theme throughout the biblical text. When the divine becomes the planter, the conceptual domain of agriculture is used to form an understanding of the relationship between man and God. Since people think metaphorically, it is not uncommon to find concepts from everyday life, such as horticulture, a dominant theme in the metaphorical conversation. In this way, the image of Israel as the plant or vine of YHWH developed within biblical literature.

The specific metaphor of YHWH as the planter of the nation of Israel is only mentioned twice in the Torah (Genesis 2 and Exodus 15), but eventually became a standard method of expression by later authors to depict the evolving picture of the divine

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and his people. The mythical language and the colorful imagery within the Song of the Sea were contributing factors that led to its popularity. David Noel Freedman eloquently argues that the poem closes with “the vivid description of the people planted in the sacred precinct, the peculiar possession of YHWH, where his sanctuary stands, the dais of his throne, all made by his own hands.” The idea of a nation being planted by God and not just a certain tribe, aided the efforts for forming a unified nation.

The emphasis on viticulture in ancient Israel contributed to the metaphorical mapping of the people as vines. For example, the ‘righteous ones’ are compared to lush trees planted by water in Psalm 1 and foreign nations are likened to tall cedars in Amos 2:9. People are depicted as plants and vines, but also as compared to “a fig tree, a lily, and the people are the fruit of the tree.” The nation of Israel is the group that is most often correlated with this planting imagery, both as a flourishing vine and as a worthless fruit. The biblical literature clearly specifies that YHWH has the ability to not only plant, but to uproot as well.

4.8 The Relationship between Planting and Uprooting

The previous survey of ancient Near Eastern Storm-gods highlighted that these gods were believed to be intimately involved in agricultural production (see chapter 3.3). For instance, Baal says he is the only one who can “fatten gods and men, who satisfy the earth’s multitudes.” Baal was able to grow the crops, yet he was also instrumental in

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249 Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 590.

250 KTU 1.4: VII.50-51.
the storms that uprooted the crops and destroyed the food. The idea of storm-gods planting as well as uprooting is a common motif in Mesopotamian as well as Canaanite literature.

The Mesopotamian storm-god Enlil was in control of the planting and the sustenance of Nippur, but he also played a part in the destruction and uprooting of the foliage as well.

The mighty one, Enlil,
Whose utterance cannot be changed,
He is the storm, destroying the cattle pen,
Uprooting the sheepfold.
My roots are torn up! My forests denuded!²⁵¹

Here, Enlil is personified as a great storm, uprooting the plants and destroying the forests. Enlil is the planter of the crops, but he is also a contender in the destruction of the crops.

Ishkur-Adad’s wrath dispatches a great deluge onto the land, as well as the uprooting of the “reed-beds out of their pools.”²⁵² The speaker in the lament warns that the word of Ishkur-Adad has the capability of drowning the planted crops and ruination of the land right down to its foundation.

The Israelite god is depicted in a similar fashion to ancient Mesopotamian storm-gods. He too had the power to plant and multiply or to uproot and destroy. The verb נַעֲשָׂה ‘to pull out’ also means ‘to destroy’ and the verb נָשְׂתָה, means ‘to uproot’ in the piel, but as a noun it means ‘root/shoot.’ Furthermore, Tikva Frymer-Kensky points out, “that such parallels as נַעֲשָׂה ‘to uproot’ and נָשְׂתָה ‘barren woman,’ נֶאֱשֶׂר ‘nursling’ and נֶאֶשֶׂר”

²⁵¹ Translation taken from Jacobsen, Treasure of Darkness, 102.

²⁵² Doyle, The Storm-God Ishkur-Adad: Texts and Studies, 151 (K.24 + (Landon, BL 16).
‘sapling,’ ‘shoot,’ ‘tender plant’ are built into the language.”

Even unintentionally, the Hebrew language exhibits a parallel between the plant world and the emergence of humans into the world.

As part of the covenant with YHWH, the people were expected to forsake all foreign idols, including family idols. Unfortunately, the ancient Israelites were not able to completely abandon some of these idols, so the Deuteronomist and other biblical writings approached this same subject time and time again.

It may be that there is among you a man or woman, or a family or tribe, whose heart is already turning away from YHWH our God to serve the gods of those nations. It may be that there is among you a root sprouting poisonous and bitter growth (Deut 29:18)

The image of the people as the root of a corrupted growth can be found woven throughout the biblical text, especially in the prophetic literature.

The prophets frequently warned the people that YHWH would uproot those who did not follow his commandments, particularly those commands surrounding idolatry.

For example, in Ezek 17:9, Ezekiel is commanded by God to dictate what will happen to the noble vine (Israel) that was planted by abundant waters:

Say: Thus says the LORD God:
Will it prosper?
Will he not pull up its roots,
cause its fruit to rot and wither,
its fresh sprouting leaves to fade?

The people broke the covenant that YHWH made with them in Deuteronomy 29, so even though they were given a prime planting location and were cared for by the divine, their roots were uprooted due to their unfaithfulness. This imagery will be developed further in chapter seven, but there is a clear connection between the planting of the people and the uprooting of the unfaithful followers within the biblical literature.

Interestingly, these images are directly tied to the people and their physical relationship with the land. When the Israelites are living in the land, they are considered “planted.” The destruction of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas in 586 B.C.E., however, displaced the people and they were no longer considered “planted” in the land. Instead, they were displaced or “uprooted” from the ground. Only once the remnant returns a few decades later, the literature depicts the people as “planted” once more. The metaphor of Israel as God’s planting coincides with the historical events of the nation, but this metaphor is also intricately connected to Israel’s flourishing wine industry in the first millennium B.C.E.

4.9 Viticulture in the Ancient Near East: An Introduction

The material remains from ancient Israel reveal that viticulture was a thriving industry in the first millennium (see chapter 5.3). The heavy winter rains nourished the soil for grain production and the grapevines were able to withstand the dry, hot summers. Carey Ellen Walsh points out that vineyards were typically planted on slopes because “the cool night air nearest the soil is denser than the air mass above and will slide
This way the freezing air near the bottom of the hill did not threaten the grapes towards the top of the slope. Since temple gardens were typically located on mountains, the iconographic evidence often features vine leaves or branches.

We know from the Assyrian literature that Sennacherib built a beautiful garden at Nineveh. D. J. Wiseman notes that Sennacherib’s garden consisted of “every type of wild vine and exotic fruit tree, aromatics and olive trees.” Ashurnasipal was interested in horticulture and much of the fruit from his garden was used to provide temple offerings. Remains from an elaborate Persian garden were found in Ramat Rahel just outside Jerusalem. The pollen from several plants, including grapes and figs were found at this location.

At Ugarit, the gods were also known to own vineyards. This may be gathered from KTU 1.22:1. 17-20, “where the spirits are offered an excellent wine which is said to be must-dew grown [ḥrt] by a god.” There are many episodes in the Ugaritic literature that describe the drinking celebrations of the gods. Baal was able to drink a thousand pitchers of wine and he often craved wine to drink. The apparent interest in wine drinking necessitated the need for wine-making facilities. The texts even specify, “that in their vineyards the gods had an installation for pressing the grapes, as had human winegrowers. This appears from a passage according to which the gods have to pour

254 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 118.

255 Ibid., 142.


sparkling wine into the wine sink [qbt].” Feasts were often accompanied by wine drinking and so this social marker is reflected in the literature as well.

Grapes and viticulture are associated with abundance and festivity in Mesopotamian literature. Pauline Albenda argues that “the introduction of the grapevine became another plant to be assimilated with a fertility deity, an event we suggest coincided with the increasingly important and widespread development of viticulture in the Near East, during the first centuries of the first millennium B.C.” The iconographic sources show that some gods were even portrayed embedded within a vine (see chapter 4.2).

Vineyards were also connected to the fall harvest and wedding celebrations, a time of feasting and renewal. Wine consumption is depicted frequently in the Hebrew Bible. According to Walsh, wine use occurs in varied contexts: “blessing, feast, procreation, wedding, cult, and military activity, among other.” There may also be some correlation between the harvesting of the grapes, the marriage celebrations, and the fall New Year festivals.

The emphasis on viticulture in ancient Israel contributed to the metaphorical mapping of the people as vines and YHWH as the planter of the vineyard. Chapter five will analyze the archaeological and textual evidence for viticulture in ancient Israel. The use of vine imagery as a metaphor in biblical Israel is directly linked to the emphasis on viticulture within the everyday experiences of the people. I agree with Meir Weiss that

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259 Ibid., 437. See KTU 1.6: IV.18
260 Albenda, “Grapevines in Ashurbanipal’s Garden, 14.”
261 Walsh, Fruit of the Vine, 32. Also, see Jeff Cox, From Vines to Wines (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 36.
metaphor utilizes, “images and combinations of ideas which are taken from the world of external reality and from the store of human expressions which are a part of man’s universal heritage, in part the heritage of the cultural traditions of generations.”

Viticulture was a thriving component of the cultural heritage of the ancient Israelites and this image seeps into the metaphorical dialogue of the biblical authors as well.

4.10 Conclusion

YHWH is depicted as an ancient storm-god in several early biblical poems/hymns, responsible for agricultural production and climate conditions. Many of his attributes stem from other ancient Near Eastern storm-god prerogatives. These gods were known as the planters and the up-rooters, depending upon their temperament. They inhabited lavish gardens and were associated with planting imagery. Metaphorically, they were depicted as planters of people. Some Sumerian, Ugaritic and Persian literature even demonstrate an autochthonous origin of mankind, further highlighting the interplay between agriculture and divinity. Biblical literature maintains the creation of man from clay, although the metaphorical discourse depicts the ‘sowing’ of people as seed.

Many metaphors from the natural world are used for YHWH, but one in particular is YHWH as the planter of the people on a cosmic mountain. This idea stems from Exod 15:17 and introduces a myriad of planting images associated with people throughout the biblical text. According to Lakoff and Johnson, “metaphor is not merely a matter of language; it involves all the natural dimensions of our experience.”

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262 Weiss, Bible From Within, 33.

263 Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors We Live By, 235.
metaphor is an indispensible part of how people experience the world. The metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE reveals a complex picture of an evolving relationship. Since metaphor expresses cultural understanding, an analysis of this particular metaphor should illuminate some of the intricacies of ancient Israelite society and thought.

After surveying Hebrew descriptions of the divine, Marjo Korpel affirms that, “the metaphorical language the Old Testament uses in descriptions of God and the sphere of the divine, forms the basis of Jewish and Christian religious language. One snapshot of this sphere is the image of the divine as a planter, but more specifically as the vintner of a carefully tended vine. The preoccupation with viticulture in ancient Israel fueled this image. Chapter five will survey the material culture and the archaeological evidence pertaining to viticulture and its importance in ancient Israel.
Chapter Five

Viticulture in Iron Age Israel

5.1 Introduction

“For the land that you are about to enter to occupy is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sow your seed and irrigate by foot like a vegetable garden. But the land that you are crossing over to occupy is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky, a land that YHWH your God looks after. The eyes of YHWH your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. If only you would heed every commandment I am commanding you today—loving YHWH your God, and serving him with all of your heart and with all of your soul—then he will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the late rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; and he will give you grass for your livestock, and you will eat your fill” (Deut 11:10-12).

The “promised land,” with its lush hilly terrains and deep valley basins, is typically pictured in the biblical text in stark contrast to the dry, arid land of Egypt. Not only is the soil of this particular area fertile and the topography varied, but the face of the divine also shines on this piece of acreage every day of the year. This is the chosen land that was promised to Abraham and his descendants, the plot where YHWH consciously “planted” the people after the wilderness wanderings.265 The benefits of this planting, however, was dependent upon a series of stipulations. The people were commanded to love YHWH completely if they desired to reap the blessings of the land. This storm-god was not going to allow the rain to fall in its proper times for grain and wine production unless these stipulations were met. The success of the crops and the flourishing of the vines depended upon the people and their relationship with the divine. Therefore, it is

265 Cf. Isa 5:7; 37:31-32; Jer 11:17; 24:5-7; Ezek 17:22-23; 24:5-7; 36:8-9. The exilic passages highlight the location of the planting as “Israel” or “Jerusalem” more than the pre-exilic passages.
imperative to discuss the correlation between the natural world and the health of this relationship.

This chapter will explore the ecological connection drawn in the Hebrew Bible between the success of the soil and the favor of the master gardener, YHWH. The ancient Israelites were completely dependent upon the soil for their sustenance and survival. As Deuteronomy 11 contends, the fertility of the land was contingent upon a certain amount of rainfall during the rainy season. Large bodies of water were in limited supply in ancient Israel, especially near Jerusalem, and so the winter rains provided the necessary nourishment for the crops. Even though many scholars have attempted to diminish the importance of the natural world within early Israelite religion, reliance on a powerful storm-god was a fundamental aspect of the early settlers of ancient Canaan.

This chapter will also discuss the prominent role viticulture played in Iron Age Israel, at both a local and national level. The dry summers and fall rains created a favorable environment for wine production. Whereas beer was the drink of choice in the majority of other ancient Near Eastern cultures, wine was the predominant drink of ancient Israel. Interestingly, beer is not even mentioned in the biblical text.  

The development of the metaphor of YHWH as the vintner of the vine “Israel” became a visual image of a culturally dominant activity and a source of pride for the people. Viticulture was intricately linked to the harvest cycle in the fall; wine making was a time of merriment for families. It was commonplace for farmers to have vineyards as part of their estates and there is evidence of royal wine production on a larger scale as well. The grape harvest also coincided with The Feast of Booths (Sukkoth), one of the

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266 Unless you consider רֶבֶן to be a term referring to all fermented drinks, not just wine.
three main pilgrimage festivals in ancient Israel. Viticulture became a powerful icon of the developing nation.

We live in a world in which advances in technology and the emergence of large corporations have detached many from food production. The consumer buys food at the market, yet rarely knows the mechanics behind the food production. What are the chances that the average wine drinker in our modern culture knows even the location of the vineyard where the wine was produced, let alone the lengthy and often fragile steps involved in wine production? The Israelite farmers, on the contrary, were intimately involved in the day-to-day production of growing their own food and drink. Norma Wirzba argues that, “food was central to a culture’s attempt to define itself and what it held dear. It carried immense symbolic power since food consumption was the concrete act in terms of which social relations, work life, geographical identity, and religious ritual came together.”

Agrarianism was the way of life for the majority of the population in ancient Israel. Therefore, the prophets’ use of images from agriculture, especially viticulture, to portray the health of the relationship between the people and their god, reflects this way of life.

5.2 Israel: Climate and Location

“O Children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in YHWH your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain” (Joel 2:23).

Israel is a small country sandwiched in between the Mediterranean Sea to the west, the desert to the east, Syria to the north, and Egypt to the south. It is considered a microcosm of the earth.

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part of the “Levant,” which includes Lebanon and part of Syria, known as Canaan in the biblical texts.\textsuperscript{268} Israel, Greece, Italy, France, and California are just a few of the areas that lie between 30 and 48 degrees north, providing ideal locations for viticulture due to climate and topography.\textsuperscript{269} Joel 2:23 mentions both the “early” and the “later” rains, that are characteristic of the Mediterranean zone (“early” refers to the rains of winter and autumn, “later” refers to the rains of spring). This small territory was also known to be rich in natural resources. The biblical text and several outside sources depict this land as abundant in honey, wine, grain, oil, cattle, and iron, to name but a few of its products (Deut 8:7-9). The early settlers became avid agriculturists and introduced many innovations, terracing being the most pertinent innovation to this study.

Israel’s natural conditions were supplanted by its strategic location in the ancient Near East. Amihai Mazar eloquently explains the importance of its location for trade and the spread of culture:

\begin{quote}
The geographic location of the country determined its important role in the history of the ancient Near East. On the one hand, this region formed a bridge between the two ends of the Fertile Crescent: Egypt on the south and Syria and Mesopotamia in the north; on the other hand, it was compressed between the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the desert to the east. This unique situation was the basic factor in the country’s history and cultural development. More than any other country in the ancient world, this land was directly and indirectly connected with other parts of the Near East and the eastern Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{270}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{269} Carey Ellen Walsh, \textit{The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel} (Harvard Semitic Monographs 60; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 27.

\textsuperscript{270} Amihai Mazar, \textit{Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E.} (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2.
The inhabitants of the Levant lived in small villages during their early years.\textsuperscript{271} Large cities developed over time as the need for walled protection became increasingly necessary, but agriculture remained the backbone of the society. Concerning agriculture in Iron Age Israel, Oded Borowski argued that, “the impact that agriculture had on ancient Israel could be seen in almost every facet of daily life, economic, social and cultural.”\textsuperscript{272} Agriculture was a consuming feature of life, work, and religion. The Israelite farmer was dependent on the soil for his sustenance. Preparing the fields, planting the seeds, and harvesting the grains and fruit would have been his preoccupation most waking hours. Ancient Israel was an agrarian culture, steeped in the regulations and traditions associated with the harvest cycle.

5.3 Ancient Israelite Vineyards

“You shall plant vineyards and dress them” (Deut 28:39).

There are at almost 300 references to the word “wine” in the biblical literature. The generic Hebrew name for wine is \( \text{Nyy} \) and is thought to derive from the Hittite \( \text{wiyanas} \).\textsuperscript{273} This makes sense considering the origin of grape vines has been identified as the central Anatolian highlands.\textsuperscript{274} The Aramaic term for wine \( \text{rmj} \) can also be found

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 338. Most of the Iron 1 village sites excavated were not fortified.

\textsuperscript{272} Borowski, \textit{Agriculture in Iron Age Israel}, 9.

\textsuperscript{273} According to Raphael Frankel, “the similar names for wine in Ugaritic (\( \text{yn} \)), Hebrew (\( \text{yyyn} \)), Greek (\( \text{\texttt{[w]oinos}} \)), and Cypro-Syllabic (\( \text{wo-i-no} \)) almost certainly derived form the Hittite \( \text{wiyanas} \), making the probability that the wine of the Levant and Greece originated from this region even greater.” Frankel, \textit{Wine and Old Production in Antiquity in Israel and Other Mediterranean Countries} (JSOT/ASOR Monographs 10; Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1999), 35. See also Brown, “The Mediterranean Vocabulary of the Vine.,” 147-51.

\textsuperscript{274} Cf. Patrick E. McGovern, \textit{Uncorking the Past: The Quest for Wine, Beer, and Other Alcoholic Beverages}. (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 103. See also, Ronald L. Gorny,
several times in the Hebrew Bible. Just as we have various classifications of wine such as Cabernet and Zinfandel, the ancient Hebrews had their own assortment of wine subdivisions. Some of these include: new wine (םֶשֶׁר); fermenting fresh wine/must (םֶשֶׁר); choice wine (שְׁמָךְ); sweet wine (רְמִית); sour wine (םֶשֶׁר), mixed wine (טֵכְסָה); spiced wine (וֹרֵכְס), and strong drink (שָׁמַר). These classifications attest to a diverse vocabulary surrounding wine production and consumption in ancient Israel. For example, there are over 150 separate terms related to viticulture or wine consumption in the Hebrew Bible, even though the mechanics of grape production is not a primary concern of the text.275 These terms are used with technical precision by the biblical authors because of wine’s trade appeal and many of these same terms are found throughout the Mediterranean basin.

The many references to viticulture in the Hebrew Bible are only one indicator that wine production was an important part of the material culture of Israel. There are also ancient Near Eastern sources that attest to the ample amounts of wine in this area. Several Egyptian texts depict viticulture as a distinctive characteristic of the Levant. For example, the Story of Si-nuhe written in approximately 1800 B.C.E., describes ancient Israel as “a good land…Figs were in it, and grapes. It had more wine than water.”276


author goes on to list many of the commodities of the land: olives, honey, barley, milk, limitless cattle, and specifies that wine was a daily provision. Wine was also one of the items in a list of booty brought back from Megiddo by Thutmose III. Furthermore, mural paintings from the reign of Amenophis II (1450-1425 B.C.E.) portray Hapiru, whom scholars have tried to show a similarity with the ancient Hebrews, pressing grapes (see Illustration 6). Based on these mural paintings, Asaph Goor argues that the Hapiru of that time were the specialized wine-makers and vintners of Egypt. This assumption may be a leap, but given the level of interest in viticulture in the Levant, the ancient Hebrews may well have been vintners in Egypt. What is clear is that, when Canaan is described in ancient sources, viticulture is mentioned as a defining feature of the area and often sought after commodity.

277 Cf. Ibid., 233.
278 See Asaph Goor, “The History of the Grape-Vine in the Holy Land,” EB 20 (1966): 47. The assonance of the terms hapiru and Hebrew (יִבְרָאִיל), as well as the seemingly similar time period that both groups existed, has led many scholars to believe that the hapiru and the Hebrews (יִבְרָאִיל) could be the same people. The discovery of the Tel Amarna letters further heightened the interest in the connection between the hapiru and the Hebrews (יִבְרָאִיל). In these letters, the Sumerian ideogram SA.GAZ and the term hapiru occur together 125 times and the SA.GAZ are recorded to be dwelling throughout Syria and Palestine, the same area that the Hebrew Old Testament states that the ancient Hebrews lived. Furthermore, several of the letters were written by the ruler of Jerusalem to the ruler of Egypt, pleading for help against the hapiru who were raiding their territories. The description of the hapiru in these letters and the descriptions in the Patriarchal narratives of how the Hebrews came to live in ancient Palestine, were very similar.

279 Ibid., 47.
While grape pips are not native to the Levant, its climate and topography provided the ideal components for wine to become a flourishing dietary staple even before the Chalcolithic period. Archaeological excavations trace the domestication of the Eurasian grapevine to the Hittite Civilization in Anatolia around 7500 B.C.E. Eventually, information and technology about fermented beverages moved south to Gaza, the Jordan Valley, and the southern Levantine hill country (ca. 3500 B.C.E.). Since wild grapes have not been found in the Southern Levant, Syria, or Egypt, branches from a successful vine must have been brought to these areas for domestication and cultivation. Victor H. Matthews argues that the success of these vines came from, “taking cuttings from proven

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281 The Hittites encircled their ancient capital at Bogazkale, ancient Hattusha, with vineyards. The Eurasian grapevine is so desirable because it is hermaphroditic. According to McGovern, “male stamens and female pistils are located together on the same flowers on the plant, whereas for the wild variety, make and female flowers occur on separate plants. The proximity of the sexual organs on the hermaphroditic plants ensures the production of much more fruit on a predictable basis. This self-fertilizing plant could then be selected for desirable traits, such as sweeter, juicier fruit or thinker skins, and cloned by propagation of branches, buds, or roots,” *Uncorking the Past*, 95.

282 Ibid., 175.
producers and by grafting branches to new vines from those plants that have produced
superior fruit.”

Grapevines became widely cultivated in the Levant by the Iron Age.

The iconographic sources illustrate that viticulture was a visible aspect of the
landscape in ancient Israel. For example, a relief depicting Israel during the time of
Sennacherib’s siege (eighth century B.C.E.) portrays the land of Israel lined with low
trees and vines (see Illustration 7).

![Illustration 7. Sennacherib’s army among low trees and vine (From relief in Nineveh).](image)

Furthermore, archaeological excavations throughout the countryside have revealed
countless vineyards and wine presses, especially from the Iron Age. The physical remains
of ancient vineyards coupled with documentation of wine production and trade,
reinforces the emphasis placed on viticulture in the biblical text.


5.3.1 Wine Production

The metaphor of YHWH as a master vintner, carefully tending the vines along the terraced hills within the vineyard, would have been an image extracted from the physical landscape of ancient Israel. The people were accustomed to seeing vineyards, some enclosed within walls and some planted along hillsides, as part of their daily wanderings. This next section will discuss the process of wine production from the planting of the initial shoot until the ripened grape has been pressed and fermentation has made the juice a desirable drink. The archaeological and paleographic evidence provide an interesting and detailed account of this intricate and often delicate process.

Viticulture involved many stages of production and required a considerable amount of time and investment on the part of the vintner. Since grape vines (*Vitis vinifera* L.) are not native to Israel, a cutting from a thriving vine was needed as the initial ‘seed.’ Climate was also a major factor in successful wine manufacturing, as grapes cannot survive below zero degrees Fahrenheit. Israel’s climate is Mediterranean, with warm summers and wet winters, which made this an ideal location for wine production. Henry Henry Baker Tristram, who catalogued the natural history of Palestine, declared that this area has, “the true climate of the Vine. The rocky hill-sides, with their light gravelly soil and sunny exposures, the heat of summer, and the rapid drainage of the winter rains, all combine to render it peculiarly a land of vines.”

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285 The seeds of grapes do not yield flavorful wine, so a section of an existing plant was removed to create a new plant.

locations for vine cultivation. Once the ground was cleared of larger stones, the vine was planted in the rocky soil, often on steep hillsides. Most grains would not have survived in such rocky soil, so the growing of grapes did not compete with the more fertile soil needed for agricultural production.

Vineyards (שֵׁרְמוֹת) in ancient Israel were primarily grown on terraces, for the ancient farmers were well aware of the mechanics of soil erosion (see Illustration 8). If the vines were planted on the top of a hill, the periodic heavy rainstorm would have washed sections of soil away and damaged the plant. Terracing was an innovative technique employed by the Israelite farmer that had not been widely used in Canaan before the Iron Age. Terracing was innovative because not only did this technique retain soil moisture, it also “prevented erosion of valuable top soil and allowed the development of a good root system for the vines.” By terracing the hills, plots of agricultural land became available that did not take away from the land needed to harvest grains in the valleys. Several archaeologists maintain that terracing was the major technological innovation of the Iron Age.

The terraced hills have remained an iconic picture of the land of Israel from its inception (Jer 31:5). For example, over fifty percent of the hillsides in the vicinity of

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287 For more information on why steep hillsides are ideal habitats for grapes, see Cox, *From Vines to Wines*, 38.

288 See Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 11. The archaeological records show only a limited use of terracing by the Jebusites in the Late Bronze period.


Jerusalem are terraced and excavations at Mevasseret Yerushalayim in 1978 revealed “a water cistern cut into the bedrock, numerous plastered basins, and channels—all findings characteristic of the oil and wine industries,” dated to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Cisterns were used to hold rainwater and irrigation systems were designed to allow moderate water flow from the cisterns to the vineyards. Creating a functioning vineyard demanded a considerable amount of planning, management, and maintenance.

Illustration 8. Terraced walls (Mevasseret Yerushalayim).

The newly planted vine (נני נפג) did not yield grapes useful for wine production during the first three or four harvest cycles, although tending and pruning of the plant were necessary during this time period. The “choice wine” (חרך) that is mentioned in Jacob’s blessing (Gen 49:11) points to “the most careful selection of canes of high quality for the extension of vineyards.” The choicest wines often required up to a decade or

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292 This illustration appeared in the article by Edelstein and Kislev, “Mevasseret Yerushalayim,” 54.

even more and, therefore, the vintner needed to tend the vine carefully tend for a good portion of his life before the crop began to produce top quality wine. Since grape cultivation demanded patience and frequent tending, the vintner needed to be committed to a sedentary lifestyle on an established plot of land.\footnote{294} According to 1 Kgs 4:25, the vine was also a symbol of stability: “During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees.”

Viticulture was not a hobby for the nomad, but rather the mark of a settled community.

Fortification is another sign of a settled community. Vineyards were fenced in to protect the plants from wild animals eating the leaves or the fruit (Song 2:15) as well as other unwanted solicitors. The vineyard described in Isaiah 5 had both a hedge (מַשָּׁם) and stonewall (דַּמָּה) for protection, as well as a watchtower (מַעַל) for detecting long-range threats. Not every vintner in ancient Israel would have had a watchtower in their vineyard, but the royal gardens and some wealthier families could have afforded this type of protection. For example, King Uzziah was known as a man who loved the soil and had towers built within the vineyards in the hills (2 Chr 26:10). Interestingly, Borowski argues that, “many of the towers built in the Iron Age still stand on the terraces where the vineyards they guarded were cultivated, and some of them are still in use today.”\footnote{295}

Destroying the crops and food sources was one of the first strategies of siege warfare, so this made the fields and vineyards especially vulnerable. The workers who maintained the vineyards often slept in these towers, particularly near the time of the harvest.

Women were also known to be “keepers” of the vineyards and may have been trained

\footnote{294} See chapter 6.3.3 for a brief discussion of the owners of the grapevine in contrast to the vintners.

\footnote{295} Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 161.
vintners as well (Song 1:6). The destruction of a vineyard interrupted years of devoted labor and careful preparation, so protecting the vines was an important aspect of the vintage process.

Once the vineyard was fortified and the vines were planted, periodic pruning throughout the year maintained the health of the crop. Pruning (סיב) was a learned skill that necessitated knowing how much harvest should be expected from year to year. If the vintner wanted an abundant harvest the following year, he would prune lightly. The subsequent year, however, there would be less to harvest because the vines cannot produce an abundant crop every year. The determination of how much pruning was needed each term was at the discretion of the vintner, but typically took place in the winter months and again in the early summer months (the Gezer Calendar states that this pruning occurred in May and June). Pruning was a complicated process, but was a necessary one to ensure fruit growth because too many wood branches or leaves on the vine would have threatened the saplings.

Even though the initial planting and cultivation of the grapes required years of preparation, the gleaning (תּוֹלֵה), treading (חרם), and fermenting (רָמַע) of the harvested grapes happened very quickly in late August and September. The archaeological remains have unearthed countless winepresses in Israel (see Illustration 9). For example, the site at Megiddo uncovered 117 winepresses, a few dating to the Chalcolithic period, but

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most dating to Iron I. The most common type of winepress (סָחַרָה or סוּרָה or הָרָפוֹ) found was the simple treading installation (see Illustration 10).

Illustration 9. Bronze Age winepress (Migdal Haemek).

Illustration 10. Winery, four-rectangle plan (Ayalon screw mortice).

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298 Picture taken from Frankel, Wine and Old Production in Antiquity, 149. Tel Aviv, Eretz Israel Museum Inst. 02 (Photo: Eitan Ayalon).
In his study of agricultural installations in antiquity in Israel, Raphael Frankel describes the simple treading installations (רמב כבס):

The simple treading installation was made up of two parts: a sloping upper surface on which the pressing of the fruit-treading, crushing, pressing—was carried out, and the lower collection vat to which the expressed liquid flowed. The two were connected by channels or bores. The vast majority of these installations were cut in bed-rock, usually in the ‘nari’, the uniform easily cut rock that forms on the surface of chalk formations throughout the region. One hundred and sixty two such installations were recorded in the 1626 sample 10 km square. The total number in the area of the Israel-Palestine Grid probably reached tens of thousands.299

The treading floors were typically rectangular in shape, although a few rounded treading floors were discovered as well. The simple ‘four-rectangular plan’ consisting of only a treading floor and collecting vat (לבן or כבש) remained the typical winery in Israel until very recent times. Since wine and oil production both involve expressing liquid from the fruit, it can be difficult to distinguish between the two installations, especially considering the biblical lexicon does not differentiate between the two. The vat for collecting the olive oil was usually much smaller, however, than the vat to collect wine and so this became one of the distinguishing markers between the two types of installations.300 Frequently, oil presses and wine presses were found in close proximity to one another.301


300 Olive picking did not begin until October, whereas the grape harvest was usually completed by late September. Therefore, some scholars argue that one installation could have been used for both processes. See David Eitam, “The Production of Oil and Wine in Mount Ephraim in the Iron Age” (Hebrew), (Unpublished MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1980, 26. Others disagree because using the same installation would have affected the taste. Cf. H. A. Forbes and A. Foxhall, “The Queen of all Trees: Preliminary Notes on the Archaeology of the Olive,” *Expedition* 21:37-47.

301 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 152-53.
The archaeological remains of wine presses in ancient Israel portray a northern Phoenician style and a southern Judean style in the Iron Age II period.\textsuperscript{302} The lever and screw press was very rare in Judaea, whereas in Galilee, this was the main type of press. The wine presses in the north and the south show “great uniformity and internal development” within their respective regions.\textsuperscript{303} Frankel concluded that regional diversity and cultural continuity was especially apparent in agricultural installations since these technologies were used by rural pheasants who rarely left their villages or had contact with other cultures. Frankel maintains that,

The cities of the Bronze and Iron Age in Israel and the Levant were basically agricultural communities, and the classical and Talmudic written sources show that the cultured elite were conversant with the technical details of the installations used. Nevertheless, the men who actually made and used the installations were not of this elite and probably often never left the immediate surroundings of their homes to see other installations, nor did they usually have many opportunities for other contacts with distant cultures.\textsuperscript{304}

In Jerusalem, however, a great variety of installations were found. This may be due to the extensive excavations that have taken place within the city. It is more likely that this diversity is due to the city’s location as a site of pilgrimage and cultural exchange.\textsuperscript{305} Jerusalem witnessed more foreign influence and less isolation that the other regions within the country and so a greater variation in wine presses is warranted.

Grapes quickly wither and fall to the ground if they are not harvested at the pristine moment, so the vintner either frequently checked the grapes maturation or remained permanently in the vineyard during the days leading up to the grape harvest.

\textsuperscript{302} See Frankel, \textit{Wine and Old Production in Antiquity}, 164-69, for a detailed assessment of these findings.

\textsuperscript{303} Frankel, \textit{Wine and Old Production in Antiquity}, 166.

\textsuperscript{304} Ibid., 176.

\textsuperscript{305} Ibid., 169.
The grapes are ready to be harvested when they are “70-80 percent water and from 10-25 percent sugar.” At this point they will yield the most liquid. A trained eye was needed to know when the vintage (דנין) had matured from a smaller and sourer fruit to a bloated, and tasty refreshment. The biblical text refers to pruning hooks as דכרות (Cf. Isa 2:4,18:5; Mic 4:3) and this was probably the tool used for vine gleaning as well. Once the harvest was gathered in baskets, it was taken to the wine installation area. The grapes were then trampled by foot and pressed with a simple lever and weight press, stored in vats, and allowed to ferment for several days at a temperature of 15-20 degrees Fahrenheit. The fermented juice was then placed in a cool place for the second stage of fermentation, which lasted at least a few weeks. The festered juice yielded the finished product, sweet wine.

The abundance of wine in the land enabled the drink to be recognized as a staple beverage and therefore became an integral part of the social scene in ancient Israel. Vineyards lined the landscape and drinking wine was just as commonplace at banquets as at the table in the farmer’s home. A vineyard was an inherited commodity, a priceless heirloom that was not to be sold at any cost. For example, the story of Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21 recalls the dramatic tale of King Ahab’s attempt to buy a vineyard. Naboth refused to sell the vineyard because he inherited it from his forefathers (ךלתל אבדר). This vineyard had become part of his ancestral identity. Even the poor drank wine (Ruth 2:14) and Levitical law commanded the people to leave some of the gleanings for the

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307 According to the *Tosefta* (Ter. 7.15), the initial fermentation lasted three days. Pliny mentions nine days (14.25.124).

poor (Deut 24:21; Lev 19:10). This was a commodity that was meant to be shared by all the people and eventually became a profitable trading commodity.

5.3.2 Wine Trade

The cultivation of the grape vine for the purpose of wine production became a national symbol and a source of communal pride for the ancient Israelites. Wine was consumed locally, but it was also a lucrative trading item. Since viticulture required a certain climate and soil type, Israel’s location further bolstered its position as a wine producing region. Furthermore, epigraphic evidence such as the Gezer Calendar, the lmlk jar handle inscriptions, the Samaria ostraca, and Egyptians sources all attest to a vibrant vintage culture, especially in the Iron Age.

5.3.2.1 Gezer Calendar

The Gezer Calendar is considered one of the earliest Hebrew (or possibly Phoenician) inscriptions dated to the late tenth century B.C.E. It was discovered at the excavations at Gezer in 1908 in a layer of dirt corresponding to the Iron II period. The paleographic comparison of the script with other inscriptions from this same time period confirms a tenth century date. This inscription is particularly interesting for our study because it details an agricultural calendar from ancient Israel/Canaan.

309 In later Jewish history (Bar Kokhba Revolt ca. 132-135 C.E.), the grapevine and grape cluster were minted on coins. Interestingly, the Jews had access to Roman coinage at this time, but minted their own coins instead. Furthermore, Paleo Hebrew script was used instead of Aramaic or Greek. See Martin Goodman, “Coinage and Identity: The Jewish Evidence,” in Coinage and Identity in Roman Provinces (ed. C. Howgego, A Burnett, and V. Heuchert; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 163–66. See also, Baruch Kanael, “Ancient Jewish Coins and Their Historical Importance,” BA 26 (1963): 59-62. Paul Romanoff, “Jewish Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins (Continued),” JQR 34 (1944): 299–312.

Although scholars agree that the small limestone tablet is a calendar of some sort, there are disagreements regarding the dual or singular suffix following the word “month” in lines 1, 2, and 6. If the suffix is dual, then the inscription depicts a twelve-month calendar. Daniel Sivan has reviewed the arguments for and against the dual suffix and concluding that, “it seems evident that the syntax of the Gezer Calendar employs the dual or singular suffix, followed by an appositive. This leads to a total of twelve months, and accounts for the linguistic and agricultural facts more satisfactorily than the other solutions proposed.”

I agree with Albright, Cross, Freedman, and others that this inscription represents a twelve-month agricultural calendar.

1. ירח אסקר ירחו Two months of it: ingathering. Two months of it:
2. ורח ורח תקשת Sowing. Two months of it: late planting
3. ורח קפרא תשרמה One month of hoeing flax
4. ורח קפרא וכלמ One month of harvesting barley.
5. ורח קפרא One month of harvesting and measuring.
6. ורח ימר Two months of it: pruning.
7. ורח קפר One month of summer fruit

Lines 1, 6, and 7 are the most pertinent to our study because they are concerned with horticulture. Line 1 denotes “two months of ingathering.” The ingathering occurred in

313 For translation “flax” see, Albright, “The Gezer Calendar,” 22.
the fall months (late August through early October), which was the beginning of the Canaanite calendar year. Borowski maintains that this reference is pertaining to the olive harvest, since olives can be harvested over several months, whereas grapes must be harvested within a few days.\(^{314}\)

Furthermore, line 6 specifies two months of vine pruning/tending (June/July). The vines were typically pruned once in the winter months (typically February) as well as the summer months, so it is not surprising that vine tending is mentioned in this time frame.\(^{315}\) According to Walsh, “in the summer pruning, the leaves as well as branches are pruned so that the sun has greater access to the fruit in its last stage of growth to ripening in the fall.”\(^{316}\) Finally, line 7 indicates a month for gathering the summer fruit, which would have included the grape harvest. Horticulture was clearly an intrinsic member of the agricultural cycle and the grape harvest was a contributing member in this carefully assigned crop rotation. The Gezer Calendar provides evidence for vine cultivation in Iron II Israel as part of the fall harvest period.

5.3.2.2 *lmlk* Jar Handles

The *lmlk* jar handles were initially discovered in Jerusalem by C. Warren in 1869, yet since then countless more have been recovered in sites across the country, Lachish in particular. Examples of these stamps number over a thousand and were impressed with a symbol as well as the word *lmlk*, “to the king/belonging to the king.”\(^{317}\) Many of the jar

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314 See Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 59.


316 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 38.

handles mention four cities: Hebron, Socoh, Ziph, and mmšt. The majority of the handles come from the same pottery house, probably near Lachish and are dated to the late eighth-early seventh centuries B.C.E.

The jars were commissioned by King Hezekiah before the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E., but their exact function is not known. They may have been used for royal storage, rationing for the military, government taxation, or religious tithes. Since Hezekiah was preparing for an Assyrian invasion, it is most likely that their production was in connection to Sennacherib and the war against Assyria (according to 2 Kgs 18:31 and Isa 36:16, Jerusalem’s vineyards were threatened during the 701 BCE Assyrian siege). They have been discovered in sites across the country, so we can infer that they were moved to various regions within the country. Some have argued that the four names indicate royal vineyards, but this theory has been hard to prove since these jars have not been found at any of these sites.

Regardless of their exact Sitz im Leben, these jars attest to vast quantities of wine being transported to various locations in ancient Israel in the eighth century. Clearly, viticulture was not restricted to the local farming community, but was also connected to the Judean government. Royal vineyards are known from the biblical text. For instance, King David needed overseers for the royal vineyards as well as for the production of wine for the wine cellars (1 Chr 27:27). Wine making was a significant aspect of the culture at the local and royal levels.

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5.3.2.3 Samaria Ostraca

The Samaria Ostraca were discovered by G. A. Reisner in 1910 while excavating the ancient site of Samaria. According to Anson F. Rainey, these ostraca consist of “66 pen-and-ink inscriptions on potsherds which record delivery of quality wine and fine oil to the capital city during the 9th, 10th, and 15th years of the king who was, in all probability, Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.E.).” These potsherds functioned as a type of administrative record and interestingly, almost all of the wine notations were written on reddish potsherds. The jars of wine and oil brought to Samaria by various “l-men” (to the credit of) may have been a form of taxation by Jeroboam II. These ostraca detail some of the more lavish exchanges of commodities among the people living in ancient Samaria in the eight century. Aside from their significance for paleographic and historical value, they confirm once again that viticulture was a traded and even taxed commodity in ancient Israel.

5.3.2.4 Trade Outside Israel

Wine was not only consumed locally in ancient Israel, but was also sold or traded abroad (see Illustration 11). As was stated earlier in the chapter, wine was imported to Egypt from the Levant even after the Egyptians began their own vineyards along the Nile in the fourth millennium. Several ancient Egyptian inscriptions attest the presence of viticulture long before the biblical era. For example, one inscription dated to 2375 B.C.E., relates how the Egyptian military commander, Uni, during the reign of Pharaoh Pepi I, was sent to quell a revolt in Israel. One of the apparent missions of their

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exhibition was to destroy not only the fortresses, but the vines as well. According to Thut-Moses III (1483-1450 B.C.E.), the people of Palestine gave the Pharaoh wine as well as other precious commodities at the surrender of Megiddo.

Illustration 11. A Canaanite merchant ship entering port (Tomb #162 of Kenamun, an Egyptian official under Amenhotep III, Thebes). The captain of the ship holds a cup of wine probably taken from the amphora in front of him.

Two Phoenician shipwrecks dated to the eighth century B.C.E. were discovered in the Mediterranean Sea in 1997, west of Israel. These ships were filled with amphora jars containing wine on route to either Egypt or Carthage. Even as late as the fifth century

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B.C.E., Herodotus mentions that, “shipments of wine in oriental jars were made to Egypt twice a year from all wine producing countries, including Phoenicia…” (Hist. 3.6). The possession of wine as a commodity eagerly sought after for trade was a defining mark of the land of Canaan throughout history.

5.4 Viticulture: The Biblical Picture

5.4.1 Agrarianism: The Ancient Israelite Worldview

The epigraphic and archaeological sources attest to the prominence of viticulture in Iron Age Israel. The biblical corpus also displays this paramount industry as a defining characteristic of the nation, as well as an image for the covenantal relationship. As an agrarian society, many of the images of the landscape, such as viticulture, became a symbol for the divine/human relationship as well. The interplay between agrarianism and metaphor development are closely associated in the biblical text. Therefore, an understanding of the natural world of ancient Israelite culture is an essential component of conceptual metaphor analysis.

Many biblical scholars before the 1980s attempted to dismiss the importance of agriculture and the deep connection to the natural environment that would have regulated the daily activities of an ancient Israelite. These scholars desired to show a distinction between the early Hebrew people and their ancient Near Eastern pagan neighbors.

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especially other West Semitic peoples such as those from Ugarit. The God of the Israelites has often been represented in scholarship as a god who acted on behalf of the people through specific historical deeds because he had a purpose to fulfill, an end game. G. Ernest Wright, probably one of the more articulated writers on the importance of history to the biblical story, aimed to erase certain traces of paganism from ancient Israel’s roots.

The Israelite knowledge of God, therefore, was not found in the first instance on the numinous awareness of nature, as was the case in polytheism. It was based on historical event. In polytheism the original and basic metaphors through which the divine was apprehended can be shown to have been derived from nature. In Israel the exact opposite is the case. Metaphors from nature, for the most part borrowed from Canaanite religion, were not the basic language by which God who had revealed himself through historical events could be described or apprehended.

But, this theologically-motivated view does not hold up under the critical consideration of the metaphorical picture of the divine depicted in the Hebrew Bible. The biblical text abounds with divine metaphors affiliated with the natural world, such as storm-god, planter, shepherd, and even zoomorphic metaphors such as lion or eagle. Decisive historical events are an important facet of the biblical story, yet not at the expense of dismissing the predominant worldview of the people in an effort to divorce them from their pagan neighbors.

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326 For most of the twentieth century there was a tendency among theologians, in particular, to argue for the supremacy of the biblical religion against the religion of other ancient near Eastern cultures. Even though a common cultural heritage was acknowledged, the Israelite god was portrayed as historically centered whereas the other gods operated primarily in nature. According to Greenstein, these scholars distinguished between two polar opposites: “a monotheistic Israel at one end and a polytheistic everyone else at the other end.” Edward L. Greenstein, “God of Israel and Gods of Canaan: How Different Were They?” in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies: The Bible and Its World* (Division A; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999), 47–58.

327 See Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 8-10, for a more detailed analysis of this perspective.

The previous two chapters established an ancient Near Eastern background to the divine planting imagery that greatly influenced the biblical metaphorical discourse. The divine as planter of the people and controller of the harvest was not exclusive to ancient Israel, but resonated as a cultural motif in the Levant and Mesopotamia. The surviving literatures of many of these ancient cultures describe and even depict pictorially chief deities as storm-gods. Even though much of biblical literature portrays YHWH as the sole god of the Israelites, this does not mean that his identity as a warrior and storm-god dissipated. YHWH was still the controller of the rainfall; he was still responsible for seed growth and for the bountiful harvest. His daily attentiveness to the soil was a symbol of his presence and this did not change just because ancient Israel was moving toward a monotheistic rather than a polytheistic outlook. Instead, vestiges of these attributes remain sprinkled throughout various sections of the Hebrew Bible and are often tied to metaphorical language associated with the natural environment.

Since our understanding of ancient Israelite society is often skewed by our modern technological instincts and our apparent dissociation from agricultural concerns, it may be helpful to illustrate the “worldview” of the ancient Israelites. Ronald A. Simkins has written quite extensively on nature and its role in the society of early Israel. He has diagrammed the basic Israelite worldview in his book *Creator and Creation* (see Illustration 12).“\textsuperscript{329}

\textsuperscript{329} Redrawn from Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 119.
In this model of creation, both humans and nature are dependent upon the creator. There is a direct correlation between the two dependent categories of creation. Humans and nature were intricately linked in the biblical worldview. This is hardly surprising considering the biblical story chronicles the experiences of a group of slaves from Egypt who were given a piece of land to call their own. This land then became deeply tied to their relationship with a generous god as well as a source of livelihood.

The Song of the Sea gracefully illustrates the movement of a homeless people from bondage to bounteousness, all by the right hand of a powerful deity, YHWH. It was this god who brought the people out of the land of Egypt, out of slavery (Exod 20:2). The Hebrew people were then given a home at the exact place that YHWH established as his abode (Exod 15:17). This land was an incredible gift, but it came with a certain level of responsibility. According to Deuteronomy 28, the people were required to follow certain stipulations if they wanted to remain in the land and enjoy its blessings. Walter Brueggemann eloquently depicts this model; “Torah is Israel’s way of living gifted life. Torah-honoring leads to ‘success’ and ‘prosperity’… Torah exists so that Israel will not
forget whose land it is and how it was given." \(^330\) The landless people were given a lavish and ample land as well as instructions of how to live in that land.

It is interesting to note how many of the prescriptions in the Torah are concerned with land use and care. For example, there are ordinances in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26) concerning the waiting time before planted fruit trees may be eaten (Lev 19:23-25), when to leave the land fallow and the vines un-pruned (Leviticus 25), what types of seeds are allowable for plantation (Lev 19:19), appropriate dietary laws (Lev 20:25), and proper care of animals (Lev 19:19; 24:18; 27:27). Lists and lists of regulations are periodically interjected with the following statement, “I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Lev 19:36). This expression is repeated eight times in the nine chapters that make-up the Holiness Code (Lev 19:36; 22:33, 43; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13, 45). The festival of booths, one of the three pilgrim festivals dictated by the Holiness Code, is even specified as a festival commemorating the exodus from Egypt. Clearly, YHWH’s role as the sole benefactor of the people was meant to be remembered. The land was a gift from the divine and therefore the resources were considered part of that gift. \(^331\)

Toward the end of the Holiness Code, YHWH promises the people abundance, protection, peace, and security if they follow his decrees: “If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Lev 26:4). He also promises to show them favor and to maintain his covenant


\(^331\) This idea that the land belongs to YHWH and that the first fruits are His, is also a theme of the Deuteronomist (Cf. Deut 6:23; 8:10; 9:6, 23, 28; 10:11; 11:9, 31; 12:1, 12:10, etc.).
with them (Lev 26:9). If, however, the people do not follow his commandments and break the covenant, he vows: “I in turn will do this to you: I will bring terror on you…You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you” (Lev 26:16-17a). YHWH threatens to make the sky like iron and the earth like copper (Lev 26:19). The success of the land and the obedience of the people to the commandments were intertwined. Rain would not come down from the sky and the land would not produce food unless the relationship between YHWH and his people was in balance. The priestly writers of the Holiness Code and Deuteronomic law both describe a conditional relationship between the success of the land and the direct actions of the people based on the exodus tradition.\(^{332}\)

The prophetic literature follows a similar pattern, yet many of their warnings are incased in metaphorical language. The threat of expulsion from the land coupled with a barren and threatening landscape is depicted in a descriptive and often ornamental language, shrouded by the agricultural world that the ancient Israelites understood. For instance, the metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL is vividly portrayed in Isaiah 5 in the Song of the Vineyard. Chapter six will analyze this passage in detail, but “viticulture” as a source domain for this conceptual metaphor is noteworthy at this point in our study. The metaphorical picture of a vineyard as a representation of the relationship between YHWH and the people is intriguing because this society had such a vested interest in viticulture. The people were keenly aware of the steps involved in wine production and wine drinking was linked to celebration as well as national identity. Therefore, in order to understand the significance of viticulture as a metaphorical concept, an analysis of various wine prescriptions in the Hebrew Bible is warranted.

\(^{332}\) See also, Deut 6:21-25; 8:1-19
5.4.2 Viticulture in the Hebrew Bible

“You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart” (Pss 104:14-15a).

In Psalm 104, the psalmist praises the divine for providing not only the necessities such as meat and bread for nourishment, but also wine for enjoyment. The importance of viticulture in ancient Israel can be seen not only in the archaeological finds and paleographic documentation, but also in the numerous references to wine and wine making in the biblical text. Viticulture was a defining aspect of the land of Canaan even before the Israelites crossed the Jordan and the Israelite settlers quickly became experts in wine production.

The first snapshot of Canaan that the biblical text portrays is marked by the presence of viticulture in the land. The spies that were sent by Moses to survey the “land” traveled to Canaan during the season of the grape harvest and they were amazed at the size of the grape clusters (Num 13:23). The single cluster of grapes that they cut from a vineyard in Wadi Eschol was so heavy that it had to be carried on a pole between two men. The grapes became an icon of the abundance of the land “flowing with milk and honey” (Num 14:8b). YHWH brought the people out of Egypt where wine was a commodity reserved for royalty or the very wealthy. Wine production was especially difficult to maintain in climates where there is little rainfall, so the ancient Egyptians imported most of their wine from the Levant and Phoenicia until vineyards were
developed along the Nile delta in the fourth millennium BCE. In contrast, the land beyond the Jordan River was overflowing with lush grapes, milk, and honey.

The first mention of viticulture in the Hebrew Bible occurs right after the flood narrative in the primeval history. According to this tradition, Noah was a man of the soil and was the first person to plant a vineyard after reaching dry land (Gen 9:20). The powerful storm-god promised to control the amount of rain that fell from the sky and Noah, in return, planted a vineyard. Viticulture is also mentioned in Genesis in conjunction with the blessing of Judah. Before Isaac’s death, he drank wine and blessed Jacob saying, “may God give you the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine (Gen 27:27-29). Likewise, when Jacob blessed Judah, he predicted that his son would acquire such an abundance of choice wine that he would be able to wash his garments in the liquid (Gen 49:11). Joseph must have known something about vineyards too, since he was able to interpret the chief butler’s dream while in prison (Gen 40:10). The availability and consumption of wine is clearly not absent from the patriarchal narratives.

Viticulture was also tied to religious practices and the temple cult. For instance, the people were instructed to offer the first fruits of the vine to God, but ultimately it was the Levitic priests who drank the libation as part of their service to the divine (Deut 18:4; Num 18:12). The priests, however, were forbidden to drink when they were in the inner courts (Lev 10:9; Ezek 44:21). Wine was also a part of the daily offering and the amount

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333 Wine was produced in Egypt near the Nile delta at the beginning of Dynasty I (ca. 3000 B.C.E.). The Egyptians probably obtained wine grafts from the Levant to start their vineyards. Before this time period, wine was imported to Egypt. See McGovern, *Uncorking the Past*, 180.

334 According to Gen 8:4, the ark came to rest on, “the mountains of Ararat.” Interestingly, Mt. Ararat is in Anatolia, where viticulture may have originated.
of wine offered was more on the Sabbath than the other days of the week (Lev 23:9-13; Num 28-29). The new moon offering was a drink offering of wine. Furthermore, all burnt offerings and peace offering required a libation of wine. Isaiah 62:8-9 envisions a time when wine would be consumed by the people in the temple courts and not by foreign subjugators. In the Second Temple period, Josephus mentions that there was a golden vine engraved over the entrance to the Sanctuary with grape-clusters as tall as a man.335 Since viticulture was a mainstay of the local economy, it is only natural that it would become relevant in the religious sphere as well.

The potent and often dangerous side effects of wine consumption are also mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, Noah, after planting a vineyard became drunk and his nakedness was exposed to his sons (Gen 9:21-22). Not only Noah, but Lot, Uriah, Elah, and King Ben-hadad were all depicted inebriated in the literature. Proverbs 23:32 compares drinking too much alcohol to being bitten by a poisonous serpent, including blurred vision and strange thoughts.336 A surplus of wine was considered a blessing, but consuming too much often resulted in regrettable circumstances for all parties involved. In spite of the dangers involved in the imbibed drink, wine was the drink of choice in countless biblical stories and was “drunk on week days as freely as during feasts.”337

335 Bell. Jud. 5.210; Ant. Jud. 15.395. Also see, Brown, “Mediterranean Vocabulary of the Vine,” 170, for more information on how the golden vine was described by Josephus, Pliny, and writings from the Mishnah.

336 Cf. Isa 5:11; Hos 4:11; Jer 23:9; Hab 2:5; Qoh. 2:3; Prov 20:1; Isa 29:1, for other negative effects of wine.

Wine is also mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as one of the staples in the Israelite agrarian diet. Jack M. Sasson, who catalogued the vocabulary for viticulture and wine production in the Hebrew Bible, describes how wine was used on a daily basis. For instance, “wine was the beverage supplied to wives (Hos 2:7), offered to palace servants (Dan 10:3), and commonly served with meals.” Several passages in Deuteronomy pair wine and grain or wine, olive oil, and grain together. Wine, olive oil, and grain formed the staple agricultural products of the fields and could be grown in rotation throughout the year. In this way, the Israelite farmer was able to make use of the land throughout the year as well as provide the necessary food and drink for his family. Grain would have been harvested in the spring and the fruit trees in the autumn. Each of these commodities could be stored for use throughout the year, so they became staples for the ancient Israelite community, especially during the cold winter months. Furthermore, access to water was very limited in ancient Israel and water often contained contaminants, so wine became a safer alternative. The fermentation process killed the bacteria found in water, so people who drank wine were protected from many water-borne diseases. Wine was the primary drink for celebration during the harvest, but it was also a drink of nourishment.

The fall wine harvest was such an important part of the culture that Deuteronomic law dictated that men were exempt from going to war if they had not enjoyed the harvest of their grapes (Deut 20:6). The grape harvest was a time of celebration not just for grape maturation, but also for the blessings of the year as a whole. The biblical text also indicates that when people traveled, it was wine that they took along with them for the

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journey (2 Sam 16:1-2). Again, this was due to the scarcity of drinkable water in the area.

Wine was integral to many aspects of ancient Israelite life and culture, yet there were some groups who abstained from drinking the substance. For instance, the Nazirites, a subset of the people who had vowed never to drink fermented drinks or cut their hair, were not even allowed to eat grapes in case fermentation had occurred (Num 6). Even Samson’s mother was commanded not to drink wine while she was pregnant because he was going to be a Nazirite. The Rechabites, who are said to have come into the land with the Israelites, are represented as a group of nomadic people who abstained from fermented drinks and did not participate in viticulture.\textsuperscript{339} Jeremiah offered them wine to drink yet they refused based on their cultural heritage (Jeremiah 35). YHWH commended this group for their obedience to their ancestor Jonadab, whereas Israel was chastised for unfaithfulness to the covenant God made with their ancestors (Jer 35:13-16). Most people drank wine daily, but there were a few groups who abstained because of their heritage.

While beer was the drink of choice in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, the drinking of beer is absent from the biblical text. Instead, wine was the fermented drink that the biblical text specifies the people drank once they entered the land. The geographical location of the southern Levant played a major role in this development. Ancient Israel falls within the Mediterranean zone, which includes Greece and Italy. Grapevines flourished in these climates and required less water than beer to produce. Furthermore, the cultivation of a vineyard required considerable time and investment

from the farmer. The text depicts a landless, nomadic Hebrew people quickly transitioning to a settled, sedentary group characterized by their exquisite wines. They then became master vintners, churning out an abundance of wine from their family vineyards while servants contributed to the production of wine in the royal vineyards.

5.4.3 Wine Enjoyment

“Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love” (Song 5:1).

Wine making was a delicate and often painstaking process, yet the end result warranted the months of laboring. The vintage harvest was a time of celebration in ancient Israel and was often accompanied by music, dancing and even weddings. Songs were sung and shouts were raised and God was praised (Isa 62:9; Joel 2:24-26; Isa 16:10). The grape harvest ended the agricultural year and was celebrated in conjunction with the festival of the “ingathering of fruit” (Exod 23:16; 34:22), later known as the festival of booths (Deut 16:13). This was a joyous time for the vintner and his family, a time for recognizing the blessings of the year.

The festival of the ingathering/booths lasted for seven days in late September-early October and was one of the three pilgrim festivals associated with the Jerusalem temple. At this time, the first fruits of the vine would have been brought to the temple and offered to the priests. King Solomon dedicated the Jerusalem temple during this festival (1 Kgs 8:2), so some scholars have argued that this festival was also a yearly “enthronement” feast as well.340 The Holiness Code dictates that the reason for the booths is so that the people will always remember that YHWH brought them out of Egypt

(Lev 23:42-3). The land was a gift and the grape harvest was a specific time of year indicated for remembrance. Regardless if the festival became associated with an act of remembrance or entailed certain cultic prescriptions regarding YHWH’s enthronement, this feast was agricultural in origin, coinciding with the grape harvest.

The “shout of the wine” (עָרֵץ הָעִשָּׁדָה) or “vintage-shout” was a familiar sound during the grape harvest (Isa 16:10). Joshua Schwartz maintains that the shouts of the wine treader “were an imitation of the sounds of thunder and rain associated with Divine blessing and theoretically supposed to encourage the Divinity to shower his blessings on the grape crop and the on the wine.”\(^{341}\) If some sort of rain dance was accompanied by the vintage shouting, then this act could be considered a vestige of YHWH’s predominance as a storm-god within ancient Israelite society. The “shout of the wine” is also attributed to YHWH the warrior in Jer 25:30. In this passage, the prophet warns that YHWH will “shout like those who tread grapes,” but these shouts will not be shouts of joy, but of anger and disappointment against all the nations. The singing shouts at the grape harvest were associated with celebration, yet the prophetic literature also portrays these sounds in a negative light, the shouts of a betrayed deity.

Aside from vintage singing, instruments were also played while the grapes were harvested. Paintings on Egyptian tombs from the third-first millennium B.C.E. depict the treading of grapes accompanied by music.\(^{342}\) The timbrel and flute are two instruments that are often associated with festive occasions. For example, Miriam and the women played the timbrel and danced to commemorate YHWH’s victory at the Sea (Exod

\(^{341}\) Schwartz, “Treading the Grapes of Wrath, 217.

\(^{342}\) Painting in Greek vases and Roman reliefs also depict musical instruments near grape treading. See Frankel, Wine and Old Production in Antiquity, 42.
The placement of the ark in Jerusalem also initiated music and dance, including King David himself. In the Song of the Vineyard, the lyre, harp, timbrel, and flute are all mentioned in conjunction with a wine-drinking feast. Music heightened the celebration and since the harvesting of the grapes was such a joyous occasion, a musical accompaniment would have been commonplace.

Women were also participants in the vintage celebrations. For example, in Judg 21:21, women are portrayed dancing in a vineyard. The Mishnah (Ta’an 4.8) states that on the 15th of Ab, the daughters of Jerusalem went forth to dance in the vineyards. The woman in Proverbs 31 is portrayed as a vineyard owner and the female heroine in the Song of Songs was a caretaker of a vineyard (Song 1:6). She was also well versed in the vocabulary associated with viticulture, even claiming that love was better than wine.

Furthermore, women drank wine along with the men according to several passages in the Hebrew Bible (Ruth 2:14; 1 Sam 1:9; Job 1:13, to name a few). In contrast, women in Greek and Roman culture were often excluded from drinking wine, especially in public. For instance, Pliny mentions that women were not allowed to drink in Rome (Natural History 14.89). Therefore, it is interesting that the biblical text does not have any prohibitions against drinking wine. Since viticulture was such an essential aspect of the family social life, it only makes sense that the women were also allowed to enjoy the fermented drink. The festival of the first fruits was a weeklong celebration and women were active participants in the festivities.

Vineyards were not the only location for communal wine consumption and merrymaking. Banquets also served as venues for mass dissipation of choice wine. The book of Esther recounts such a banquet and the eventual demise of the queen because she
would not comply with the drunken requests of the king. From LBA Ugaritic sources we learn that the dead were often honored in a ritual cultic banquet (*Marzeah*) where mass drunkenness ensued. There is a hint of this same type of banquet in Jer 16:5-9 (םזרח חצרי). Here, the prophet Jeremiah is warned that he should not go to the “house of mourning” for the impending destruction of the people. Wine consumption was clearly a social rite associated with weddings, funerals, times of celebration and mourning, as well as the vintage harvest.

5.5 Conclusion

“You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it” (Pss 80:7).

Wine production was a prevailing symbol of ancient Israelite culture. The land was fertile and the climate was ideal for viticulture. The Canaanites and Phoenicians were exporters of this fine commodity long before the biblical era, yet the Israelite farmers also contributed to the wine industry through innovations such as terracing. Vine tending was tedious and required years of patient pruning, yet the end result brought pleasure and became a staple drink for the people. The landless people were given a home and one of the marks of their movement away from a nomadic lifestyle was the commitment to the family vineyard. The grape harvest marked the end of the agricultural year, so the vintage became a time of celebration. To be able to enjoy the fruit of the vine was a sign of prosperity and peace; “they ate and drank and were happy” (1 Kgs 4:20).
Israel was close to the soil, an agrarian culture, so it is hardly surprising that many of their metaphors derive from agriculturally centered vocabulary. Even though various scholars have tried to divorce Israel from their naturalistic outlook due to polytheistic concerns, the people of the Bible were intimately involved with nature. The prophets used agricultural terminology to convey the evolving relationship between YHWH and the people because this was also part of their daily vocabulary. The Hebrew Bible is latent with images of wine production because the prophets themselves were well versed in the actual mechanics of the grape harvesting from initial planting to fermentation. Viticulture was the pride of the land and so the people described as the “vine” that YHWH brought out of Egypt and planted, further reiterates their claims to this new homeland.

Metaphors express cultural understandings. The ancient Israelite cultural milieu was heavily entrenched in wine production, so metaphors concerning this same process began to be likened to the relationship between the divine and the people: when this relationship is flourishing, the vine is vibrant and there is abundance in the land; when this relationship is broken, the vine suffers too. The three Babylonian campaigns against Judah (597, 586, and 581 B.C.E.), as well as the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., ripped the vine from its roots. If YHWH planted a choice vine in a promised land, how does this metaphor fare after these tragic events? This metaphor continues to not only represent a barometer of the health of the covenantal relationship, but it also continues to be a dominant image for the Jewish people. The subsequent two chapters will explore the image of the people as a vine throughout biblical history.
Chapter Six

Pre-exilic Biblical References to Vine and Planting Imagery

6.1 Introduction

“For the vineyard of YHWH of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting” (Isa 5:7a).

Viticulture was a fundamental component of the agricultural backbone of ancient Israel. The vintage also became a symbol of the luxurious lifestyle that so many enjoyed, the wealthy in particular. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the grape vine became a conceptual tool for the prophetic oracles of this time period. Chapter four analyzed the planting metaphor within its ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu. The iconographic and textual evidence illustrates that planting imagery, especially metaphors affiliated with storm-gods as planters of the people, can be found throughout ancient Mesopotamia as well as the Levant. Exodus 15 demonstrates this particular metaphor within biblical literature. According to this ancient song, YHWH planted his people on the mountain where he dwelled (Exod 15:17). This text commemorates the point in time when the ancient Israelites were planted and given a land to call their own. Canaan was known for its luxuriant vines and so the inhabitants began to be associated not only with planting imagery, but more specifically with vine imagery.

The complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL illuminates a narrower snapshot of ancient Israelite culture. Since language is conditioned by environment as well as social factors, studying the metaphors within the literature of a culture can be a powerful tool in comprehending various aspects of society at a given time. Chapter five surveyed the archaeological picture of viticulture in ancient Israel as well as the biblical
portrayal of this industry. Wine production was a significant feature of the agricultural cycle as well as a lucrative trade export in Iron Age Israel. Viticulture was more prevalent in the Levant than in other ancient Near Eastern Cultures in the Iron Age, so metaphors using this imagery would be more appropriate in this setting than somewhere else.

Metaphors are shaped by two factors: physical environment and social context. Since ancient Israel was an agrarian based society, most metaphorical language stems from the physical landscape. For example, the prophetic literature is saturated with appeals, often in the form of metaphor, petitioning the people to reconcile their relationship with the divine. This often includes insistence that some change is made, especially regarding acts of social injustice or the worship of foreign deities. Frequently, these metaphors are drawn from the natural environment because their lives depended on an ecological balance between the necessary rainfall for a bountiful harvest verses drought or even inundation. Since YHWH was ultimately thought to be in control of this delicate balance, the divine/human relationship became intrinsically linked on several levels. The desiccation of the land was associated with divine wrath whereas agricultural abundance symbolized divine favor.

This chapter will survey the emergence and development of the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL throughout biblical literature, paying particular attention to the prophetic literature. The metaphor of YHWH as the “vintner” and the people as the “vine” became one of the symbols of the health of the divine/human relationship, as well as a barometer for measuring the level of social justice in the land. Since viticulture was linked to the social, economic, and cultic spheres, this metaphor
spoke to all levels of society. The image of the people of Israel as grapevines is sprinkled throughout prophetic oracles particularly in the eighth century B.C.E. and even later texts drew on this particular association. The Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5 exemplifies this metaphor meticulously, although it may not be the earliest portrayal of this idea. Much of this literature has gone through a rather complex editorial process, yet this particular metaphor follows a trajectory paralleling the growth of the wine industry in ancient Israel.

The metaphor of YHWH as a vintner of ancient Israel has its roots in planting imagery, the Song of the Sea often cited as capturing a joyous moment of conception for a homeless people. There are also a few other passages in the Hebrew Bible that depict people as plants in a favorable light (e.g. Num 24:6), but this all changes with the eighth century prophets. The prime example of this shift is depicted in the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7). Here, the speaker expresses disillusionment and frustration for “the pleasant planting” because they did not live up to the stipulations of the covenant and produced “stinking grapes” rather than choice wine. Deuteronomy 11:16-17 and Lev 26:19 specify that there will be no rain and the land will not yield fruit if the covenant with YHWH is violated. These stipulations are revisited in Isaiah 5 as YHWH proclaims that there will be no rain and the land will become an arid wasteland (vs. 6) because the people have strayed from the commandments. Much of the language associated with this metaphor

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343 I contend that the late Judahite monarchy (eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.) was the period of time when most of the pre-exilic biblical texts were written down. Prov 25:1 suggests that during the reign of King Hezekiah, proverbs were copied down. Many of the oral traditions, such as the early poetry, were also probably compiled at this time. The urbanization of Jerusalem in the late eighth century facilitated this process. Jerusalem became a large state during this time as refugees from the north fled to the city due to the Assyrian campaigns. This created an ideal context for centralization of power and a written history. For a detailed analysis of the social and economic circumstances that facilitated scribal schools and attracted literary composition, see William M. Schniedewind, “Jerusalem, the Late Judahite Monarchy, and the Composition of the Biblical Texts,” in Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period (ed. A. G. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2003), 375–93.
expresses disappointment with the vine(yard) because it was given all the resources
necessary to thrive, but instead produced an unusable harvest.

Post-exilic references to the metaphor of the vineyard are not as prolific as pre-
exilic. Instead, plant imagery rather than vine imagery re-emerges in the metaphorical
discourse and the “remnant” are portrayed as a plant within in a lush garden-like
atmosphere (these references will be explored in detail in chapter seven). Viticulture
metaphors shaped the language at a certain point in Israel and Judah’s history, namely the
late monarchical period, when the wine industry was generating an enormous profit.

6.2 Early Vine Imagery

6.2.1 Introduction

There are only a few instances of pre-exilic divine planting imagery outside of the
eighth and seventh century prophetic literature and these examples depict the people as
“plants” more frequently than as “vines.”\textsuperscript{344} For example, in Exod 15:17, the people are
planted by YHWH, but the text does not specify if they were vines or not. The Balaam
Oracles (Numbers 22-24), the Jotham Fable (Judg 9:7-15), and the Dynastic Oracle (2
Sam 7:10) are the other three texts that portray people as plants. There are a few psalms
that also adopt this imagery (Pss 44:1-2; Pss 80:7), but these are much more difficult to
date.\textsuperscript{345}

\textsuperscript{344} See Appendix 1 for a complete listing of divine planting imagery in the Hebrew Bible.

\textsuperscript{345} Ps. 80:7-13 is an extended poetic section with affinities to the Song of the Vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7). Several
scholars (e.g. Gunkel and Begrich) have assumed an eighth century B.C.E. date for this psalm due to the
references to the Joseph and Benjamin tribes, composed in Northern Israel before the Assyrian campaigns.
But it may have also been composed during the time of Josiah (e.g. Kraus and Schmidt). See Marvin E.
The image of the people as a vine(yard) became a theme of the writings of the eighth century writing prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah of Jerusalem). Viticulture was a burgeoning industry in ancient Israel at this time, linked to corruption and exploitation of the poor by the wealthy. The prophets used a symbol of prestige and affluence, the wine industry, to convey divine disappointment and anger. Even though there are several texts that link viticulture to abundance and prosperity in the biblical literature (see chapter 5.4.3), the successive metaphorization of the people as vines is predominantly portrayed negatively in the literature.

6.2.2 The Balaam Oracles (Numbers 22-24)

The Balaam Oracles (Numbers 22-24) depict the sayings of a unique prophet, Balaam son of Beor, who blessed Israel prior to its entrance into the land. He was not an Israelite, yet he is attributed with speaking the words of YHWH. In Numbers 24, he equates the nation of Israel with thriving plants along a river: “like palm-groves that stretch far away, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the Lord has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters” (Num 24:6). The planting imagery used here depicts an idyllic location, where lush gardens span out as far as the eye can see with waters running alongside. Just as YHWH planted a garden in Genesis 2, he is portrayed as the planter of a thriving nation as well.

Even though Balaam was commissioned by Balak, the king of Moab to curse Israel, Balaam was not able to curse the nation. Instead, he blessed Israel because he could not “curse whom God has not cursed” (Num 23:8). The people are likened to palm-groves, a garden, aloes, and cedar trees, but not vines in this passage. Since Balaam
was not from Canaan, he may not have been as familiar with viticulture imagery. Therefore, the more commonplace plant and tree imagery is invoked. The planting imagery in this passage, however, does depict the people in a favorable light as the people that YHWH chose to bring out of Egypt (Num 23:21).

6.2.3 The Jotham Fable (Judg 9:7-15)

The Jotham Fable (浻ש) narrates an imaginary story about talking plants, representing the peoples’ desire for kingship. After Gideon passed away, his son Abimelech wanted to be king even though his father was against kingship (Judg 8:22-23). So, he elicited the support of the people of Shechem and killed all of his brothers except Jotham, who barely escaped. Jotham then told the people a story about trees and their attempt to anoint a king for themselves. An olive tree, fig tree, and vine are all asked to be the ruler, but refuse. The vine declined on the grounds that he would not be able to produce wine “that cheers gods and mortals” (Judg 9:13). This story does not specify that the vine is the nation of Israel, but it is interesting that the olive tree, fig tree, and vine were the most common fruit producing trees in ancient Israel. Furthermore, wine is highlighted as a drink that gladdens not only mortals, but the gods as well. In the Hebrew Bible, God is never mentioned drinking wine, but ancient Near Eastern mythological texts highlight the importance of wine to the pantheon.

346 This passage could also fall under the broader category of mashal (מָשָׁל), a comparison. In the Hebrew literature, mashal can include everything from proverb to allegory and even metaphor.

347 This story is often compared to Sumerian “contest literature” because it follows a similar structure: introduction, mythological-etiological introduction, the circumstance that prompted the debate, and the debate itself. There was typically a judgment scene at the end before a god. See Silviu Tatu, “Jotham’s Fable and the ‘Crux Interpretem’ in Judges IX,” VT 56, Fasc. 1 (2006): 109.
Jotham likened Abimelech to the briar/desert thorn (אשנָר) in the fable, meaning that his leadership would lead to the demise of the people. Interestingly, in the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7) the Israelites are depicted as a vineyard that is left overgrown with briers and thorns (צומחים ו>briers and thorns (צומחים ו> because of their corruption. The word choice is different in these two texts, but the imagery is representative of the agricultural picture of ancient Israel. Those who do not possess divine favor were metaphorically the same as a desert wasteland, causing more harm than good.

6.2.4 The Dynastic Oracle (2 Sam 7:10)

The Dynastic Oracle (2 Sam 7:1-17), which discusses the legitimacy of the Davidic kingship, echoes divine planting imagery from Exod 15:

וָסָמַךְ לְמוֹקֵם לֵוָיָרָאֵל וָנַשַּׁמַּת וָשֹּׁם תַּחְתֵּיהּ וָלֵא יִרְגֹּם וָשֹּׁד

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more (2 Sam 7:10a).

The oracle specifies that David would be given rest and God himself would build a house for David’s heir. The deliberate choice of words in the Dynastic Oracle: YHWH as a planter of the people of Israel, recognition that this planting will occur in a specific location, the mention of rest, and the building of a house for Yahweh, are clearly allusions to Exod 15:17. The purpose of this allusion was to bolster the political strategy of the united monarchy, namely that the place of planting referred to in Exodus 15 is Jerusalem and the Davidic line should be the responsible party for the building of the sanctuary. The promise to David illustrates how specific vocabulary from the Song of
the Sea was used to create a new discourse in the Israelite community.\textsuperscript{348} The divine planting imagery served as a unifying factor for the developing nation.

6.2.5 Conclusion to Early Vine Imagery

The literature illustrating divine planting imagery in the Hebrew bible typically likens the people to a planting of YHWH. This association is portrayed positively and is often associated with the idea that YHWH brought the people out of Egypt (Exod 15:17; 2 Sam 7:10; Num 24:8; Pss 80:7) and planted them in a specific place. The portrayal of the Israelites as a vine(yard), however, does not convey the same positivity. The vine(yard) image became a motif of the eighth century prophets who masterfully crafted a polemic against the ruling and wealthy elite using terminology from the economy’s dependence on wine production. Even though the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7) develops this image in great detail, the writings of Hosea may be the earliest depiction of this motif. The Song of the Vineyard is an important starting point for a discussion of the vine metaphor. An analysis of this song will serve as the catalyst for the vine imagery imbedded within the oracles of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah of Jerusalem.

6.3 The Song of the Vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7)

6.3.1 Introduction

“Yet I planted you as a choice vine from the purest stock. How then did you turn degenerate and become a wild vine?” (Jer 2:21)

The Song of the Vineyard is a showpiece of Hebrew poetic style. Repetitive parallelism, fluctuation of speaker voice, the ability to evoke a variety of emotions, and

\textsuperscript{348} See William M. Schniedewind, \textit{Society and Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1-17} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34, for the dating of this oracle.
the development of a vivid metaphor, resonate from these seven verses of Hebrew scripture. According to Hannes Olivier, “virtually all of the outstanding features of Hebrew poetry are employed: wordplay, assonance, alliteration, rhetoric and chiastic structure, alternation of accelerating or retarding tension, different metric accents, variance in tone and mood, etc.”\textsuperscript{349} The singer uses a myriad of poetic devices to construct and dismantle an image of ancient Israel as a people planted by a divine vintner. The song opens with language reminiscent of a wedding elegy, yet closes with images of devastation and woe, more typical of a funeral song.\textsuperscript{350} The literary unity of the song is unchallenged, although this may be the only accordance that scholars share regarding this piece of literature.\textsuperscript{351}

Even though the Song of the Vineyard has been labeled a “poetic masterpiece of Old Testament Literature,” it is still one of the most complex songs in the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{352} Over a century of scholarship has produced more than 12 different Gattungen for Isa 5:1-7.\textsuperscript{353} This song has been categorized as a parable,\textsuperscript{354} a love song,\textsuperscript{355} a lawsuit


\textsuperscript{350} See Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 87.


\textsuperscript{352} Otto Kaiser, Das Buch des Propheten Jesaia (ATD 17; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 96.


or complaint, a fable, a song of a disappointed husband/lover, and an allegory, to name just a few proposed genres. Most scholars identify several genres within the seven verses, a “song” or “parable” being the two most consistent genres depicted.

Even though the Hebrew Bible designates these verses as a “song” (תִּנְפָּשׁ), many scholars refer to Isa 5:1-7 as the “Parable of the Vineyard” in their work. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to Isaiah 5 as a “song,” since this is what the text specifies as its genre (vs. 1). The categorization of biblical “genres” does not typically fit the mold of our modern notions of literature classifications, so there may never be an agreement on the specific genre(s) of this song.


361 According to Robert Alter, “songs and hymns of the Bible were not written in quantitative meters, as were the songs of ancient Greeks, nor do they have regular rhyme or alliterative patterns, as do the songs of many other peoples.” Art of Biblical Poetry, 1. Therefore, I find it more valuable to compare biblical poetry to ancient Near Eastern poetry rather than force biblical verse to conform to modern criteria of poetic technique. Furthermore, Hans Kosmala argues that, “we base our scanning entirely on the Masoretic vocalization and accentuation of the texts.” Hans Kosmala, “Form and Structure in Ancient Hebrew Poetry (A New Approach),” VT 14 (1964): 424. This may not reflect 2nd millennium B.C.E. vocalization, which is another reason why it makes more sense to compare Hebrew poetry to poetry within its own cultural milieu.
The *Sitz im Leben* of the song is another greatly debated subject. The setting has been depicted as a vintage feast either at the Jerusalem temple or in the northern countryside,\textsuperscript{362} a wedding or prenuptial song,\textsuperscript{363} a drinking song possibly associated with the Marzeah feast,\textsuperscript{364} a song of self-condemnation,\textsuperscript{365} a court of justice,\textsuperscript{366} or even a song depicting fertility rites.\textsuperscript{367} The opening of the song: “my beloved had a vineyard,” may have been a popular line of a song that the audience was familiar with, possibly a wedding song.\textsuperscript{368} Weddings were often celebrated in conjunction with the vintage harvest and biblical love poetry associates the vineyard as a metaphor for female sexuality or a place of lovemaking (cf. Song 1:6; 8:12).\textsuperscript{369}

Regardless of the exact setting of the hymn, this song has an uncanny ability to grab the attention of the audience with each twist and turn. The speaker is an enchanted storyteller equipped with descriptive and poignant language intended to stir emotion. The verses are cleverly organized so that the audience is not aware from the beginning that this dirge demands introspection as well as metamorphosis. Olivier argues that, “every reader is challenged to participate in the song that narrates the simple story of a


\textsuperscript{365} A. Graffy, “The Literary Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” *Bib* 60 (1979): 400.

\textsuperscript{366} Fohrer, *Proheten des Alten Testaments*, 107-8.


\textsuperscript{368} Willis conjures that Isaiah could have borrowed a few words from a popular song to gain his audience's attention, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7, 360.”

\textsuperscript{369} Longman III, *Song of Songs*, 219.
farmer’s frustrated expectations, only to be drawn into deep self-reflection of his own conduct in life.” The listeners cannot walk away from hearing this song without recognizing that there is a problem with God’s ‘pleasant planting’, and this problem does not lie with the divine.

The Song of the Vineyard depicts YHWH’s frustration with the people, the people of Judah in particular. Since the book of Isaiah shows clear evidence of editing by later redactors, it is often difficult to date precisely which oracles belong to the eighth century prophet. The first part of the book of Isaiah (chs. 1-39) is often attributed to Isaiah of Jerusalem since there are many polemics against Assyria and Egypt. The concern for societal morality found in first Isaiah is often compared with similar themes in the other eighth century writing prophets (Amos, Hosea, and Micah). The language of the song can also be dated to the late monarchy because it is composed in Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH), which shares linguistic similarities to a corpus of Hebrew inscriptions written in the late Iron Age (725-586 B.C.E.).

The Song of the Vineyard will be textually analyzed focusing on the complex metaphor that emerges within the song: YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL. Chapter five illuminated the prominence of viticulture in ancient Israel and the Levant, so the emergence of this metaphor within biblical literature is a reflection of the material

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370 Olivier, “God as Friendly Patron,” 293.


373 In this song, there is evidence of: matres lectionis, the waw-consecutive, the cohortative, the lamed of ownership, the particle 'כ, the use of 3ms as the 3ms suffix, and assimilation of the nun to the following consonant, to name a few linguistic markers. See, Schniedewind, A Social History of Hebrew, 99-125, for a detailed discussion of the categorization of Hebrew in the late monarchy.
culture. The speaker utilizes a visual image to illustrate social dynamics as well as a broken relationship.

6.3.2 Textual Analysis of Isaiah 5:1-7

The Song of the Vineyard is typically broken down structurally into three or four canticles based on strophe and external parallelisms. The successive clauses of either two synonyms or closely associated words create parallelistic lines, which constitute appropriate line breaks. These sections are best organized into four canticles. Ancient Near Eastern poetry, Ugaritic poetry in particular, shares many affinities with biblical poetry. James Kugel, who has written extensively on biblical poetry, acknowledges that, “the resemblance of certain repetitive structures in the Bible with Ugaritic repetitions is so close as to indicate beyond reasonable doubt an organic connection.” Therefore, I based the layout of Isa 5:1-7 on not only content, but also on the relationship of the strophes within the four canticles. Separating the song into canticles will aid the development of the vineyard metaphor, which is paramount to our study.

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374 A canticle is a unit consisting of one or more strophes. According to Korpel and de Moor, “the strophes in the canticle are held together by external parallelism, sometimes a very clear and repetitious type of parallelism, more often only a few words here and there.” Marjo C.A. Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, “Fundamentals of Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetry,” in The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry (JSOTSup 74; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1988), 41.


377 The LXX does not rearrange, add, or delete any words from the song, but the voice is changed to first person in most instances. The LXX translation maintains a first person speech throughout except in vs. 1b: “my beloved had a vineyard.” The speech in the MT moves back and forth between first and third person.
Isaiah 5:1-7

1a Heading

Now let me sing for my beloved,
a song of my beloved regarding his vineyard:

1b Canticle I.

My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.
He dug around it and cleared it of stones, and planted it (with) choice vines;

2a Canticle II.

He built a watchtower in the midst of it, and he even hewed a winepress in it;
He waited for it to yield grapes, but it produced wild (rotten) grapes.

2b Heading

And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah:
Judge, now, between me and my vineyard.

3 Canticle III.

What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?
Why did I wait for it to yield grapes, and it produced wild (rotten) grapes?

4 Canticle IV.

And now, let me make known to you what I will do to my vineyard:
Its hedge removed, and it shall be broken through;
Its walls broken, and it shall be trampled down.

5 I will make it a waste, it shall not be pruned, it shall not be hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns;
I will also command the clouds not to rain upon it.

6 For the vineyard of YHWH of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting.
6.3.2.1 The Heading: Isaiah 5:1a

The heading of the Song of the Vineyard (vs. 1a) gives the impression that this text is going to be a love song since the singer states that the song is for “my beloved.”

The prophet assumes the character of a popular musician to illicit the attention of the audience. The grape-picking season and the vintage festival occurred in the fall months and were often accompanied by wedding celebrations. Men and women were both present on these occasions and the mood was light. Singing, dancing, and drinking were all part of the festivities (Isa 62:9; Joel 2:24-26; Isa 16:10). The singer of this song may have been the bridegroom, a friend of the bridegroom, or even the bride herself.

Women are specified as the singers of several songs preserved in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Song of Miriam-Exod 15:21, Song of Deborah-Judg 5, some of the Song of Songs), and women are often the musicians on these occasions too. Song 8:11 is noteworthy because the woman sings a song about Solomon that begins in a similar manner to the first canticle of the Song of the Vineyard: תֵּאָרֶךָ הָיוָה לֵשָׁלוֹם (Solomon had a vineyard…). In Isaiah 5:1b, the body of the song begins: תֵּאָרֶךָ הָיוָה לֵוָיִי (my beloved had

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378 Translation is mine.
380 Williams, “Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah V 1-7,” 459-60.
a vineyard…). The heading of this song may have captured the first few lines of a popular wedding song or betrothal, the vineyard symbolizing the bride.\footnote{161}

Women are depicted as vineyards and fields in Sumerian, Egyptian, Ugaritic, and biblical texts.\footnote{382} For example, a marriage text from Ugarit (KTU 1.24) describes the betrothal of the West Semitic moon god Yarikh with the Mesopotamian moon goddess Nikkal-Ib.\footnote{383} The poetry is erotic and descriptive from both the male and female lovers, yet it is the female who is envisioned as a vineyard: “I will make her field like a vineyard, the field of her love like a flower-garden/orchard” (KTU 1.24:23-24).\footnote{384} Similarly, the opening and closing songs of the Song of Songs are framed by references to the Shulammite woman as a vineyard. In Song 1:6, the woman admits that even though she is the vintner of her family’s vineyard, her own vineyard she has not kept. She allowed the sun to darken her complexion instead of veiling herself as was customary at the time. When women were described as “fields” or “vineyards,” there was an idea that they needed to be cultivated and carefully maintained.\footnote{385}

In the last song of the book, however, the woman claims her vineyard for herself, “my vineyard, my very own, is for myself” (Song 8:12). This woman is no longer

\footnote{381} It is interesting to note that just as the divine is often portrayed metaphorically using images from nature, so too love poetry describes the male and female lovers in similar terms. The Song of Songs is saturated with images from nature to describe either love or actual male/female anatomy. Nature was a source for descriptive language because the people were dependent upon and deeply connected to the natural world.


\footnote{383} The goddess’s name either means “great lady,” “the fruit,” or “the radiant one.” See Simon B. Parker, ed., \textit{Ugaritic Narrative Poetry} (SBLWAW; Athens, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1987), 215.

\footnote{384} Translation is mine

\footnote{385} See also, Pss 128:3a: “Your wife is like a fruitful vine inside your house.”
embarrassed by “her vineyard.” Instead, she is portrayed confident and assured, completely in control of her property. She utters this line right after describing Solomon’s vineyard that was entrusted to several keepers. The Shulammite woman maintains that she does not need anyone to “keep” her vineyard because her vineyard belongs only to her. The love poetry in these songs creates a “mood of shared love” where the man and woman are equal players, transcending social class. These same egalitarian images are found in Ugaritic love poetry as well, KTU 1.24 often utilized as a primary example. The image of the woman as a vineyard was a theme in love poetry, which is why the first line of the Song of the Vineyard may have initially evoked sensual images.

The opening lines of the Song of the Vineyard conjure images of love, a possible love song akin to the love poems in Song of Songs. The catchy tune sparked the curiosity of the people listening and they became eager participants, wondering what the singer would say about the beloved. The first canticle of the song then beautifully articulates the beloved’s devotion and concern for his vineyard.

6.3.2.2 Canticle I: Isaiah 5:1b-2

Canticle I details the painstaking labor that the vintner invested in his vineyard. This farmer found a pristine location (probably on a terraced hill), cleared the soil of the larger boulders, built a watchtower with the removed boulders, planted it with prized vines, and hewed a winepress out of stone. Chapter four chronicled the various steps

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386 Carol Meyers, “Gender Imagery in the Song of Songs,” in A Feminist’s Companion to the Song of Songs (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 2001), 211.

387 See also, KTU 1.10, 1.11, and 1.23, for examples of other Ugaritic love songs.
involved in preparing and maintaining a vineyard in Iron Age Israel, and these few lines accurately depict this process. The watchtower would have been found at more lucrative vineyards, but its mention in the text testifies to the attention the vintner took to protect and fortify the vineyard.\footnote{Borowski, \textit{Agriculture in Iron Age Israel}, 106.}

The first verse of Canticle I advances the image conjured in the opening strophes, still reminiscent of a love poem: “my beloved had a vineyard” (possibly referring to the woman lover). The phrase יִבְרָאִית הֲנֶשֶׁת is typically translated as “on a very fertile hill.” However, in most biblical and Ugaritic texts, מַרְמָא means horn. This is the only instance where this word is translated ‘hill’ rather than horn. Horn may have been chosen rather than hill to prolong the illusion of a love poem. We know from Ugaritic poetry that horn and oil were often paired together. For example, Baal anointed the horn of Annat’s headdress with oil in KTU 1.10.II 21-23. The use of ‘horn’ and ‘oil’ in Isaiah 5 may still have evoked images of a woman as a vineyard, since, according to Korpel, “perfumed oil played an important role in the ancient Near Eastern love poetry (cf. Song 1:3; 4:10).”\footnote{Korpel, “The Literary Genre of the Song of the Vineyard,” 125.}

The labor-intensive job involving stone removal and ground clearing described in verse two are not typical images associated with love poetry. The technical terms for ‘digging up the land’ (חֻפָּה) and ‘clearing the land of stones’ (לָצַה), as well as building a ‘tower’ (לֶדֶם) and ‘hewing the winepress’ (בעָשָׁה) would have evoked the mechanisms of

\footnote{Gen 27:28 and Num 13:20 use the term מַעֲשֶׁה (oil, fat, rich), to designate land that is ready for viticulture.}
wine production rather than love poetry.\footnote{Since this text is highly metaphorical, the tower may have represented Zion and the wine vat may have referred to the lowest point in the city. See Korpel, “Literary Genre of Song of Vineyard, 128.”} Furthermore, the term \( \text{דועש} \) could be translated several ways: choice vines, a vine variety that produces red grapes (\textit{Vitis vinifera}), or vines from the valley of Sorek.\footnote{Hundreds of oil presses have been found at Ekron (Tel Miqne) and Timnah (Tel Batash) in the Valley of Sorek. See G. L. Kelm and Amihai Mazar, “Three Seasons of Excavations at Tel Batash-Biblical Timnah,” \textit{BASOR} 248 (1982): 34-35. Walsh also argues that this valley had the necessary components for viticulture. Walsh, \textit{Fruit of the Vine}, 110.} This term is somehow connected specifically to viticulture and therefore could not be considered language akin to love poetry. This is language more specific to vine grower trade secrets and the vintage harvest rather than love poetry. Even though the scene has changed, the speaker remains the same and the song continues to highlight the diligence of the vintner. This vintner is well experienced in vine care and he expects his vineyard to yield a luscious vintage.

Isaiah 5:2b abruptly alters the tone of the song from love and anticipation, to shock and disappointment. Since viticulture was one of the staple crops of the agricultural cycle in ancient Israel, most people would have had some knowledge about the steps involved in the vintage process. Victor Matthews, drawing upon this scene in Isaiah 5, argues that, “the audience is both familiar with the various aspects of viticulture and capable of making the connection alluded by the speaker.”\footnote{Matthews, “Treading the Winepress,” 23.} The vintner took every precaution to create an ideal habitat for his grapes, yet his harvest burgeoned into odious and worthless wild grapes (\( \text{גנבת} \)).\footnote{\( \text{גנבת} \) is a \textit{hapax legomenon}. It is typically translated ‘wild grapes’ or ‘stinking/bad smelling’ from the root \textit{vab}.} The listeners would have sympathized with the
protagonist’s confusion and disillusionment, since he invested possibly five or six years of his life into a futile pursuit.

The vintner expected the grapes to be sweet and luscious because he had dutifully followed all the necessary steps to ensure the harvest was a success. This is the point in the song that speaks to the brilliance of the author because he/she has moved the audience through various stages of emotion and disappointment was not the expected outcome of such a lovely dirge. It is at this moment that the metaphor of the vineyard moves beyond erotic underlays and vintage landscapes, and the audience is invited to become an active participant, a judge, of the disappointed vintner.

6.3.2.3 Canticle II: Isaiah 5:3-4

Canticle II calls on the audience to form an opinion about the vintner in question, who is now identified in first person as the speaker. The disappointed vintner has captured the audience’s sympathy and now he conjures them to reflect on where he went wrong. He waited (vs. 2b, 4b, 7b) patiently for the fruit of his labor, but the result was the opposite of what he had expected. Injustice and frustrated expectations often lead to various interpretations and so it is not surprising that the speaker expects a response to his questions. John S. Kloppenborg eloquently depicts the thrust of this predicament; “a realism that provokes the hearers to render a judgment in the case decided, unaware that in doing so, they condemn themselves.” Since the Jerusalemite listeners may still be unaware that they are the ones being judged, it would have been easier to render a judgment against the vintner.

2 Samuel 12 is another text that envisions a hypothetical story of injustice. After King David had Bathsheba’s husband killed in war, the prophet Nathan told the king a story about the injustices of a poor man at the expense of a rich man. King David’s anger was “greatly kindled” against the man who killed the beloved sheep of the poor man. He was quick to pass judgment on the rich traveler, not knowing that he was in reality, passing judgment on himself. The devastated poor man in 2 Samuel 12 and the disappointed vintner in Isaiah 5 are stories that ignite the social passions in each one of us.\footnote{396} The repetition of endings in verses 4 and 5 reiterate the misfortune of the patient vintner. The main purpose of installing a vineyard was to benefit from the wine that it produced. Carey Walsh argues that, “to cultivate a vineyard, tread its grapes, and not to drink the wine, became a repeated biblical symbol of misfortune (Deut 28:39; Job 24:11; Amos 5:11; Mic 6:15; Zeph 1:13).”\footnote{397} The misfortune of the patient vintner elicited a reaction from the listeners until they realized that they were the stinking fruit.

\textbf{6.3.2.4 Canticle III: Isaiah 5:5-6}

Isaiah 5:5-6 could be considered a rant and rave rather than a ballad. It is hard to imagine this section of the song accompanied by a timbrel. In direct contrast to verses 1b and 2, these verses describe in minute detail the dismantling and utter destruction of the carefully tended vineyard. Instead of a \textit{migdal} and walls for protection, it is left open to the elements. Instead of delicately pruned vines, there are briers and thorns.\footnote{398} The fertile

\footnote{396} Naboth’s vineyard could also be classified in this category.

\footnote{397} Walsh, \textit{Fruit of the Vine}, 209.

\footnote{398} The loss of the hedge and fence may represent the Assyrian invasion, which becomes a theme in chapters 6-12. See Blenkinsopp, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 208.
hill became a wasteland, arid and void of the water necessary for growth. The vineyard is not only left unattended, it is intentionally razed to the ground. Just as the vintner labored to create the vineyard, the dismantling required physical effort as well.

The speaker’s assertion that he had the power to command the clouds not to rain on the vineyard would have directed the audience to the true identity of the vintner, if the previous verse had not already blown his cover. The powerful storm-god, one who had the power to bless or curse the land, chooses to curse the vineyard here. This imagery echoes the blessings and curses found in Deuteronomy 11: “the anger of YHWH will be kindled against you and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain and the land will yield no fruit; then you will perish off the good land that YHWH is giving you” (Deut 11:16). YHWH promises rain for the vine (Deut 11:14) if they followed the covenant, but he vowed that there would be no rain or fruit if the covenant was disregarded (cf. Deut 28:25; Lev 26:19-20). The Song of the Vineyard visualizes these curse-formulae. The planting of the divine is expected to yield ‘choice fruit’ or the rain will stop and the land will become an inhabited wasteland.

Canticle III captures the rage that is often evoked by severe disappointment. The vineyard is not left to its own demise to slowly wither and fade over time. Instead, the land is ravaged by its creator. The divine anger is not something that is depicted lightly in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, angry YHWH is a vengeful god, intent on punishment. Robert Carroll noticed that YHWH’s anger is often related to food and drink in the prophetic literature, the grape-treader illustrating one of these motifs. In Isaiah 63, YHWH is depicted as a grape-treader/warrior, covered in the blood of the people: “I have trodden the wine press alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them
in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their juice spattered on my garments, and stained all my robes” (Isa 63:3).\(^{399}\) According to Carroll, “the berserker god is a mad chef intent on violence and destruction, wreaking havoc on all people and against their lands. It is a most horrific representation of a terrifying figure, reflecting much of the mythology of the gods in the ancient Near East.”\(^{400}\) YHWH is not necessarily depicted as a grape-treader in Isaiah 5, but the imagery confirms that the pleasant planting will taste the cup of his wrath (Isa 51:17; Jer 25:17-29; 51:1-7). In this text, God’s wrath takes the form of drought and desiccation.

In ancient Israel, there was a fine line between security and abundance and famine and devastation. The forces of chaos were never completely at bay in a world dependent upon not only the agricultural calendar, but the threat of enemy attack as well. The once luscious vineyard, carefully constructed and organized, quickly became a desolate and barren environment, devoid of a future harvest. The overgrown briers and thorns became a symbol of the forthcoming destruction of the land and its people.

### 6.3.2.5 Canticle IV: Isaiah 5:7

The Song of the Vineyard portrays a vine grower generally shocked and frustrated by the worthless fruit that was harvested. He did everything in his power to ensure that his vineyard would be successful. He was destined to grow sweet grapes because he planted a “choice vine” from the “purest stock” (Jer 2:21). Sour and poisonous grapes

\(^{399}\) Also, see Lam 1:15. These texts illustrate exilic imagery, but they stem from the vineyard desolation motif articulated in Isa 5:1-7.

\(^{400}\) Carroll, “YHWH’S Sour Grapes,” 114.
are harvested from the “vinestock of Sodom and the vineyards of Gomorroah” (Deut 32:32), not from the plantings of YHWH. Yet, by verse seven, the speaker reveals that אֲבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל (the house of Israel) and בֵית יְהוֹבָחִי (the people of Judah) are the choice vines that were planted in verse one. Interestingly, both Israel and Judah are identified with the vineyard. If the listeners were in fact Jerusalemites, then this would have come as a shock to them because they saw themselves as far superior morally to northern Israel. Northern Israel succeeded from the monarchy and stopped worshipping at the temple, but the Judahites were the faithful followers of YHWH, the pleasant planting. The harvest of justice and righteousness did not emerge from the house of Israel or the people of Judah.

According to the final verse of the song, instead of justice (幔צְמָן) the Lord of Hosts found bloodshed (מְשֶׁבֶת), instead of righteousness (צדקָה) he heard a war cry (נַשְׁבָּת). The choice of these two sets of word pairs was intentional. Justice and bloodshed differ from one another in pre-Masoretic orthography by only one letter, the same for righteousness and a cry.401 This is Hebrew poetics at its finest, complete with similar sounding antonyms and word play. Justice and righteousness are terms that form a common word-pair in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the book of Isaiah (cf. 1:21, 27; 5:7, 16; 16:5; 26:9; 28:17; 32:1, 16 56:1; 58:2; 59:9, 14). I agree with R. W. L. Moberly that the location of this word pair at the climax of the song is a precursor for chapter five as a whole.402 The stress is placed on the moral concerns of the society rather than cultic obligations. Israel and Judah are the stinking grapes of injustice and unrighteousness. Joseph Blenkinsopp argues that when these two terms are used in tandem, “the basic

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401 Phoenetically these words were different, but orthographically they differed by only one letter.

connotation is of a society in which the rights of all, including the most marginalized—the destitute, orphans, and widows (1:17, 21-23; 11:4-5) are respected.” The fruit of the vines should be justice and righteousness, not bloodshed and a war cry. The Song of the Vineyard symbolizes the level of corruption in the land, a corruption so vile that the land literally “stinks” of its filth.

6.3.3 Reasons for the Destruction of the Vineyard

“YHWH enters into judgment with the elders and princes of the his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses” (Isa 3:14).

Isaiah 3:14 as well as the woe oracles of Isa 5:8-17, paint a vivid picture of the socio-economic situation that angered the divine vintner in the Song of the Vineyard. The lavish lifestyle of the elite is highlighted, who pursued wine both day and night (5:11) without regard for the commandments. They sequestered the estates of rural farmers in order to control the economic means of production, amassing great wealth (5:8). This led to an uneven distribution of wealth and became a source of criticism for the eighth century prophets (cf. Amos 5:11; Isa 10:1-4; Mic 2:2). Isaiah of Jerusalem, Amos, Hosea, and Micah are particularly concerned with the social implications of these economic disparities. The first chapter of Isaiah highlights that unless the people become

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once again a “city of righteousness” and are “redeemed by justice,” YHWH’s anger will not subside (Isa 1:26-27).

The archaeological evidence also confirms that the eighth century B.C.E. was a turning point in agricultural production, both for northern Israel and Judah. For example, the discovery of the Samaria Ostraca jars as well as large storage complexes throughout the country demonstrate that there was a centralized distribution of agricultural products, wine in particular, by the time of King Hezekiah (ca. 715-687 B.C.E.). The agricultural shift from subsistence based farming to cash cropping was also enhanced by advances in production such as terracing (see chapter 5.3.1). Samaria flourished under this emerging system until the campaigns of Sennacherib destroyed the city in 701 B.C.E. This caused large groups of refugees to move south toward Jerusalem and the Judean highlands.406 The city of Jerusalem was able to accommodate the immigration of many fleeing the Assyrian army largely in part because of innovations in agricultural production. According to Olivier, “along with new water conservation techniques, e.g. the construction of rock-cut cisterns, the gradual implementation of iron tools and the so-called dry farming method, it resulted in the dramatic increase of 600% in the population, as is evident from the large number of new villages (five acres or less) that were established in this area at that time.”407

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One of the main reasons for the growth of the agricultural industry in the eighth century was wine production. As Israelite and Judean societies became increasingly urbanized, wine became a lucrative trading item. Egypt and Mesopotamia did not have the climate or soil quality necessary for a thriving viticulture operation. Therefore, wealthy landowners began the process of latifundialization, depriving the local peasants of most of their harvest as well as requiring them to pay heavy taxes. This placed an enormous burden on the rural population, which prompted many of the social speeches of the eighth and seventh century prophets.

The social grievances caused by the wealthy coupled with their desire for a greater economic output of resources, led to their chastisement in prophetic literature, Isaiah 5 in particular. According to the text, “their root will become rotten, and their blossoms go up like dust” (Isa 5:24). What was planted will be burned and rejected because YHWH “stretched out his hand against them” (Isa 5:25). The Assyrian campaigns against the North caused a devastating blow to the economy and most of the terraced land was destroyed. However, Jerusalem benefited from the influx of people displaced by the Assyrian sieges and much of the land surrounding the city, including

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Hebron, was used for wine production. This led to a similar social stratification that was witnessed in Samaria a few decades before, “joining house to house, field to field” (Isa 5: 7). The prophets were concerned about the marginal and underrepresented members of society, so many of their attacks were against the elite few who had the power and economic means to alter these injustices; injustices that were considered the core of YHWH’s wrath.

6.3.4 Conclusion to Isaiah 5

“Woe is me! For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the vintage has been gleaned, finds no cluster to eat” (Mic 7:1).

The disappointed vintner was a persona that deeply resonated with an eighth century Jerusalem audience. Viticulture was a profitable export for the wealthy and a menial, but sustainable job for the peasants. Even if the landowners were not involved in the daily maintenance of a vineyard, as shrewd businessmen they would have known the ins and outs of wine production. To labor for years and not be able to enjoy the fruit of the harvest was considered a tragedy in biblical literature. The prophet Isaiah masterfully crafted a melody that struck a cord with the audience. In this way, the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL became a recurrent image within prophetic literature. This metaphor emerged from the primary metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE, commonly attributed to the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:17), but developed more specifically during the eighth century B.C.E.  

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The Song of the Sea echoes the memory of the birth of a nation depicted as a choice planting, complete with joyous singing and unbridled confidence. The Song of the Vineyard, however, captures the disillusionment of a deity, embittered by a splintered nation. The choice planting did not produce the expected results envisioned by a victorious storm-god in Exodus 15. These two songs follow a similar metrical pattern, yet their messages are quite different.\textsuperscript{412} Exodus 15 portrays the people as plants, which was a common metaphor for people in the ancient Near East. Isaiah 5 draws on this image of the people as plants, yet the Israelite people are depicted more specifically as vines rather than the broader category of “plants.” However, the vine imagery is not a positive symbol and conjures images of exploitation and greed rather than tranquility and abundance. In this way, the inhabitants of Israel and Judah became associated with worthless vines, a powerful tribute to the metaphorical creativity of the authors.

6.4 Vine imagery in Amos, Hosea, and Micah

6.4.1 Introduction

The eighth century prophets, keenly aware of the societal importance of the grapevine as an economic stimulus, began to correlate the people with the vine itself. Unfortunately, this was not usually a affirmative description of the people, but rather a polemic against the social injustices caused by the ruling class. Almost every reference to viticulture, whether metaphorically or literally, carries a negative rather than a positive tone.

\textsuperscript{412} For a discussion of the similar meter between the two songs, see Haupt, “Isaiah’s Parable of the Vineyard,” 150.
6.4.2 Amos

“This is what YHWH showed me—a basket of summer fruit. He said, ‘Amos, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘A basket of summer fruit.’ Then YHWH said to me, ‘the end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them’” (Amos 8:1).

The prophet Amos lived during the reigns of Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.E.) and Uzziah (783-742 B.C.E.). The book of Amos describes the prophet as an agricultural man, although he may have been more influential than the text portrays. He is described as a shepherder (1:1), a herdsman (7:14), and a sycamore fig gatherer (7:14). Given his uncanny rhetorical competence and his awareness of the political and social issues of Israel and Judah, Amos may have been a wealthy landowner himself. Amos was especially concerned with the poor and their plight. The rich were exploiting the laborers to the point that they had to sell themselves off into slavery to pay their debts (2:6; 8:6), while they lived in houses of hewn-stone and drank bowls of wine (5:11).

The oracles of Amos attribute the social disparities to a lack of justice and righteousness. In Amos 5, the prophet calls out, “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream” (Amos 5:24). Justice and righteousness as a word pair was also as theme of the prophet Isaiah (see chapter 6.3.2.5). The moral implications of taking advantage of the poor are highlighted as the chief complaint in

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414 Sheepherder (רַבָּר, רַבָּר) and sycamore gatherer (םִמוּק, מִמוּק) are both hapax legomena.


416 This word pairing possibly originated with the oracles of Amos, since his ministry is considered several decades earlier than Isaiah of Jerusalem.
these writings and Amos vividly predicts impending doom on the northern kingdom 
(3:12, 15; 5:2, 17; 7:9, 11; 9:8). Interestingly, references to viticulture resonate 
throughout the oracles.

Wine imagery is associated with the moral depravity of the people in the book of 
Amos. In the first eight chapters of the book, there are eight references to viticulture and 
they are all connected either to the moral sins and greed of the wealthy or predictions of 
impending disaster:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vine Imagery in Amos 1-8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:12</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:9b</td>
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<td>5:11</td>
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<td>5:17</td>
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<td>6:6</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:1</td>
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<td>8:10</td>
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**Table A**

The predictions of doom (5:11, 17; 8:1, 10) depict angry YHWH, intent on causing pain 
and destruction to a wayward people. The vintage feast is described as a place of 
mourning instead of celebration; wine will not be produced in vineyards any longer. All 
of this will happen because YHWH is going to pass through the vineyard, never to return. 
The other references describe the blatant greed and lavish lifestyle that the wealthy had
become accustomed to in Israel and Judah. Altogether, the representation of viticulture in Amos is bleak, considering this was a time of incredible economic prosperity due in a large part to wine production.

Amos 9:13-15 is the only section of the book that shows viticulture in a favorable light and it is describing a futuristic era of restoration:

The time is surely coming, says YHWH, when the one who plows shall overtake the one who reaps, and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says YHWH your God.

Many scholars assume that these verses are a later redaction of the book following the Babylonian destruction in 586 B.C.E., but these verses could have also been added during the Hezekian period when Amos may have reached its final form.\(^ {417} \) Verse fifteen draws on imagery reminiscent of 2 Sam 7:10, but could also be related to post-exilic references to “plucking” and “planting” (see chapter 7.4).

Images of viticulture are sprinkled throughout these oracles, yet not often in a favorable light. The association of the people with the vine(yard) is not visibly apparent in the book, but the summer fruit analogy (8:1) could be a reference to worthless grapes. In chapter nine, the people are referred to as a futuristic planting (9:15) of YHWH, one that will never be plucked up again. This vision includes a promise of restoration, where the hills will flow with wine in abundance and the people will once again be able to drink the wine from their vineyards. Thus, the planting that is referenced could be a reference

\(^ {417} \) Schniedewind, *Society and Promise to David*, 64. Schniedewind summarizes the arguments regarding the dating of these verses. Also see Smoak, “Building Houses and Planting Vineyards,” 26-29.
to the people as vines more specifically. The complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF THE PEOPLE is not clearly laid out in these oracles, but viticulture is highlighted as a prominent theme in the litigations against the wealthy residents. It is the prophet Hosea who develops this association more definitively.

6.4.3 Hosea

“Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit” (Hos 10:1a).

The writings of the prophet Hosea (ca. 752-721 B.C.E.) focus on northern Israel before the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C.E. Unlike the prophet Amos, who was mainly concerned with inequality and social justice, the writings of Hosea are also preoccupied with the covenant and Israel’s faithfulness to YHWH. The people had turned to Canaanite gods and were erecting altars to these gods, as well as participating in sexual orgies connected to these fertility cults (2:5b-14; 9:10). The majority of passages associated with viticulture in the book of Hosea mirror the image of the people as harlots, whoring themselves to other gods instead of remaining faithful to YHWH.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:5-6</td>
<td>For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers; they give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’ Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns; and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15</td>
<td>From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when came out of the land of Egypt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:8-9</td>
<td>She did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished upon her silver and gold that they used for Baal. Therefore, I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season; and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:11-12a</td>
<td>I will put an end to all her mirth, her festivals, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed festivals. I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:11</td>
<td>Wine and new wine take away the understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When their drinking is ended, they indulge in sexual orgies; they love lewdness more than glory.

On the day of our king the officials became sick with the heat of wine.

They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds; they gash themselves for grain and wine.

Threshing floor and wine vat shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail them. They shall not remain in the land of YHWH.

They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to YHWH, and their sacrifices shall not please him.

Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel.

Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit.

Israel is luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. YHWH will break down their altars, and destroy their pillars.

I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

These passages depict the people as so off track from the covenant commandments that they did not even know that it was YHWH who supplied them with the grain, wine, and oil that they were using to worship Baal. Therefore, it is not surprising that Hosea references the Exodus event throughout his writings, in an attempt to stimulate their memories of who planted them in the land (2:15; 11:1; 12:9, 13; 13:4).

Sexual orgies, slashing themselves before foreign gods, and building altars, are all intertwined with viticulture imagery in these writings. In Hosea 10:1, the luxuriant vine is depicted as a metaphor for Israel. Hosea may be drawing on this image from the oracles of his contemporary Isaiah of Jerusalem, or this metaphor may have originated in this context. Either way, the vine has become corrupted and so angry YHWH pledges to take away the wine, the vintage singing, the festivals, and the vineyards themselves.

Just as Amos 9:11-15 imagines a forthcoming era when the people’s fortune will be restored, Hos 14:4-7 too features an idyllic homecoming. The vivid agricultural imagery envisions the people as a lily, a forest with deep roots, an olive tree, a garden,
and a vine. YHWH is depicted as the dew, a crucial component to vine survival during the hot summer months. The divine anger has subsided at this point and he once again promises to not only protect his planting, but also to be a constant presence.

6.4.4 Micah

“You shall tread grapes, but not drink wine” (Mic 6:15b).

The writings of the prophet Micah (ca. 725-687 B.C.E.) echo the predilections of the destruction of the vineyard depicted in Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. The people are never specifically attributed to vines in Micah’s oracles. Instead, the best of the people is likened to a brier and thorn hedge, unfit for producing any desirable fruit. This imagery is reminiscent of the Jotham Fable (Judg 9:7-20), where Abimelech’s leadership is compared to a bramble/desert thorn, bound to cause more harm than good (see chapter 6.2.3). Vineyards that do not yield the desired outcome continue to resonate in the oracles of Micah, a tragedy for the grape treader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vine Imagery in Micah</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:1-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Micah 7:1-4 is a noteworthy passage because it draws heavily on the imagery of the disappointed vintner in the Song of the Vineyard. According to the lament in Micah 7, there are no grapes to eat after the harvest (Isa 5:2b), everyone lies in wait for blood (Isa 5:7), the people pervert justice (Isa 5:7), and the people are associated with briers and thorns (Isa 5:6a). Since Isa 5:1-7 may have been a well-known song in the eighth-century, the allusion to this song in Micah 7 further bolsters its importance as an image of the lawlessness and perversion of the population. There are allusions to the Song of the Vineyard in other texts as well, many of which are considered seventh century or later (cf. Jer. 2:21; Pss 80:7; Isa 27:1-3).

The prophet Micah compares the great city of Samaria to an uncultivated vineyard, littered with large stones. This is not the picture that comes to mind when a vineyard is envisioned. A vineyard is usually pictured as a piece of land, cultivated with vines and carefully tended fruit. Micah utilizes an uncommon depiction of a vineyard to predict the complete destruction of a major city. In this way, the prophet turned a symbol of prestige and abundance into a curse against the people.

### 6.4.5 Conclusion to Eight Century Vine Imagery

Metaphors express cultural understandings and so the best metaphors are the ones that speak lucidly to their audience. Isaiah of Jerusalem, Amos, Hosea, and Micah were all prophets who conveyed a message of condemnation and destruction, often accompanied by images of wine consumption or wine production as a symbol of this impending doom. Viticulture represented a thriving industry for trade as well as a symbol of prosperity and local culture. Therefore, curse imagery associated with
viticulture would have resonated with the listeners. External threats such as drought or invasion were a reality of daily life, not to mention the fear of divine retribution. The prophets expanded upon these concerns, managing to create a vivid image of the peoples’ failure to meet the divine’s expectations.

6.5 Conclusion

The “figurative creativity” of the eighth century writing prophets is remarkable. We are all aware to some degree of the world we live in, and these men utilized their surroundings to develop culturally specific images. Viticulture became a useful tool for depicting the frustration of the divine with the people whom he had planted. Even though wine is often portrayed in a positive light in many passages in the Bible, in many of the oracles of Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah, wine becomes a symbol of excess and profiteering. The people themselves are likened to this excess through vine imagery and their fruit becomes the rotten stench of a failed harvest.

The Assyrian campaigns in the late eighth century disrupted wine production in the north for a period of time, but the southern province of Judah was able to maintain a thriving wine export until the Babylonian campaigns in the early sixth century B.C.E. The biblical text indicates that unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians spared the vinedressers and tillers of the soil and left them in the land, while carrying the rest of the people off to captivity (2 Kgs 25:12). Does the material culture support this statement? Chapter seven will analyze what affect the Babylonian destruction and subsequent exile had on the booming wine trade as well as if these events altered vine imagery as well.

Chapter Seven

Exilic and Post-exilic References to Vine and Planting Imagery

7.1 Introduction

The destruction of the northern kingdom in the late eighth century B.C.E. caused a mass influx of refugees into fortified cities in Judah. These migrants needed protection from Assyrian siege warfare, which had destroyed most of the northern territory as well as large areas of the Judean foothills.\(^{419}\) The population in and around the city of Jerusalem also increased substantially, which demanded an agricultural base to sustain the influx. Jerusalem became a central hub offering protection, a centralized government, a temple for worship, and a growing economy. Viticulture contributed to the economic viability of Jerusalem as well as nearby settlements within Judah.\(^{420}\)

The recovery of hundreds of \textit{lmlq} jar handles dating to the time of King Hezekiah (c.a. 715-687 B.C.E.) suggest that the government either allocated certain fields for royal wine production or land owners were required to donate portions of their harvest to the state (see chapter 5.3.2.2). Hezekiah was well aware of the strategies behind siege warfare, so he kept commodities stored in various locations across the territory. The

\(^{419}\) See Israel Finklestein and Nadav Na’amán, “The Judahite Shephelah in the Late 8th and Early 7th Centuries B.C.E.,” \textit{TA} 31 (2004): 60–79. Also, Israel Finklestein, “The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh,” in \textit{Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King} (ed. M. D. Coogan; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 169–87. According to Finkelstein, the foothills west of Jerusalem were significantly hit by Assyrian warfare, 173. However, Nadav Na’amán’s recent article maintains that Jerusalem’s population growth was not due to refugees fleeing the northern kingdom, but rather the city grew gradually from the ninth to the seventh centuries B.C.E. Nadav Na’amán, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah’s Premier City in the Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.,” \textit{BASOR} (2007): 21–56. Either way, the city had expanded by the eighth century and required certain resources to sustain the population.

\(^{420}\) For a look at the growth of small farmsteads around Jerusalem in the eighth through sixth centuries see, David Amit, “Farmsteads in Northern Judaea (Betar Area), Survey,” \textit{Explorations and Surveys in Israel} 10 (1991): 147–48.
government clearly had a vested interest in the lucrative wine trade, but they were not the only ones. Many of the wealthy citizens within the city also accumulated land for cash cropping. Just as the Samaritans were chastised for sequestering land from the rural farmers, the Jerusalemite landowners followed a similar pattern. Prophets such as Isaiah of Jerusalem and Jeremiah attempted to warn the leadership in particular, that if they did not change they would ensure a similar fate to the northern kingdom. These words were in vain. Between 597 B.C.E. and 581 B.C.E., the Babylonian armies ravaged Judah and eventually destroyed Jerusalem, exiling countless to Babylon.

The Babylonian exile caused immeasurable damage to many fortified towns throughout Judah and severely crippled the agricultural sector.\footnote{See Avraham Faust, \textit{Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period: The Archaeology of Desolation} (SBLABS 18; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 1, for a list of archaeological surveys that attest to destruction layers in many cities, including Jerusalem, Lachish, Ramat Rahel, etc.} Viticulture was a visible source of enjoyment and revenue, growing alongside the surrounding hills of the territory. Since people are attuned to the world in which they live, Zoltán Kövecses would argue that, “differential social-cultural experiences and differential cognitive processes can lead to variation in metaphors.”\footnote{Kövecses, \textit{Metaphor in Culture}, 293.} Therefore, the disruption of something as visible as viticulture should noticeably alter metaphorical language as well.

This chapter seeks to explore how the Babylonian exile influenced the metaphor \textit{YHWH is the Vintner of Israel}. The century leading up to the exile was an era of economic surplus and rising literacy.\footnote{See Schniedewind, \textit{How the Bible Became a Book}, 91-101.} Therefore, examining how a watershed event such as warfare affected the metaphorical mappings of the culture, should illustrate the correlation between environment and the development of conceptual metaphors.
Prophets such as Ezekiel, who wrote in exile in Babylon, would not have had the same visual resources to draw from as Isaiah of Jerusalem. Interestingly, even though the image of the people as vines fades in the post-exilic biblical texts, plant imagery as a whole does not completely disappear. Instead, once the people are “uprooted” from the land, they are brought back as a “branch” and re-planted in a sacred garden. Thus, the returning remnant, depicted as the Garden of YHWH, replace the negative connotations of the people as a worthless vineyard.

7.2 Exile

7.2.1 Introduction

“Gather and rescue us from among the nations” (1 Chr 16:35).

The destruction of several towns in Judah by the Babylonians in the early sixth century and the subsequent exile of many of the inhabitants was a defining moment in the social history of the Jewish people. Fortress locations such as Lachish and Arad were burned to the ground and Jerusalem was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar’s armies. Even though several biblical scholars have attempted to minimize the devastating impact of this event, the biblical literature and the archaeological evidence paint quite a different picture. According to demographic surveys, the population of Jerusalem shrunk from

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approximately 40,000 inhabitants in the sixth century B.C.E. to 1500 people in the fourth century B.C.E. The Babylonian armies either killed or displaced the inhabitants of the city. The number of settlements in Jerusalem declined by at least 89%, although directly after 586 B.C.E. the percentage was probably even greater.\(^{425}\) Those who fled and those who were exiled were displaced from their homes, their culture, and their history.

Much of the hype surrounding “the myth of the empty land” is primarily concerned with Jerusalem since it was the economic and cultic center of Judah. There have been multiple archaeological surveys conducted in Jerusalem and the surrounding area in the last few decades.\(^ {426}\) These reports confirm that the city was in fact emptied of the majority of its inhabitants.\(^ {427}\) But what about the other major towns in Judah? Did they share the same fate as Jerusalem? Why were some cities razed to the ground while others indicate continuity? Were agricultural exports such as wine and oil a factor in the Babylonian campaign strategy? These are some of the questions that this section seeks to unravel.

### 7.2.2 The Myth of the Empty Land

“So Judah went into exile out of its land” (Jer 52:27).

The well-known archaeologist, William Foxwell Albright, claimed that during Neo-Babylonian Judah (586-539 B.C.E.), “all, or virtually all, of the fortified towns in


\(^{426}\) Ibid., 328, for a list of major excavations in Jerusalem over the last several decades.

Judah had been razed to the ground. There is not a single known case where a town of Judah was continuously occupied through the exilic period.”\textsuperscript{428} Subsequent scholars have also argued this same position, most recently Ephraim Stern. After surveying the destruction of numerous tel sites, he too concluded that, “all its cities lay in ruins by the end of the Babylonian period.”\textsuperscript{429} These reports contradict the claims of Hans M. Barstad and Thomas Thompson who argue that only a few went into captivity and therefore the distinction between a pre-exilic and post-exilic Judah should not be taken seriously historically.\textsuperscript{430} Granted, the literary and epigraphic evidence we have for this time period is meager, but this is why the archaeological surveys are so important for understanding the material culture.\textsuperscript{431} There is ample evidence of a destruction layer during the Neo-Babylonian period for the cities of Lachish in the west, Arad in the south, Jericho in the east, and Jerusalem in the center.\textsuperscript{432} However, there are many towns in the Benjamite territory (Transjordan) that were not destroyed, which may be why many Judeans fled to these places.


\textsuperscript{431} Even sixth century pottery is undistinguishable from late Iron Age pottery.

\textsuperscript{432} There have been numerous studies published on the archaeological surveys of these cities. Cf. Eleanor K. Vogel, “Bibliography of Holy Land Sites,” \textit{HUCA} 42 (1971): 1–96. Eleanor K. Vogel, “Bibliography of Holy Land Sites II,” \textit{HUCA} 52 (1981): 1–92. Eleanor K. Vogel, “Bibliography of Holy Land Sites III,” \textit{Hebrew Union College Annual} 58 (1987): 1–67. Faust surveyed the archaeological data from large sites. He argues that, “an early-sixth-century destruction layer (or at least abandonment) was found in practically all the excavated central sites, and the destruction was usually attributed to the Babylonians. Regardless of the agents of these destructions, the country was nevertheless devastated.” Faust, \textit{Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period}, 244.
Bethel, Gibeah (Tel el-Fül), Mizpah (Tell en-Nasbeh), Gibeon (El-Jib), Mozah, and Anathoth are towns located in the Benjamite territory that show a continued settlement pattern even after the Babylonian campaigns.\textsuperscript{433} Interestingly, Gibeon and Mozah were known for wine production. James Pritchard’s excavations at Gibeon unearthed wine cellars, rock-cut wine presses, as well as wine storage jars from the Neo-Babylonian period.\textsuperscript{434} These remains suggest that large quantities of wine were manufactured in Gibeon. An elaborate water system was also uncovered, which supplied water from several springs to the ancient inhabitants as well as the agricultural fields. This site does show a level of continuity during the Neo-Babylonian period, possibly due to the survival of the agricultural infrastructure.

The biblical record cites Mizpah as the administrative center for the Babylonian appointed ruler, Gedaliah (2 Kgs 25: 22-23).\textsuperscript{435} Excavation surveys indicate that the town may have expanded during stratum II, which dates to the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.\textsuperscript{436} Over sixty stamped jar handles (exilic or postexilic) were discovered here as well as seal impressions. Furthermore, biblical and Second Temple literature mentions this place as a cultic center even down to the Roman period (Judg 20; 1 Sam 7;


\textsuperscript{434} James Pritchard produced one of the few archaeological studies devoted to wine production. He dated these jugs to the late Iron II period, but Carter and Wright argue for a Neo-Babylonian and perhaps early Persian period. Six inscribed jar handles were found at Gibeon. See James B. Pritchard, \textit{Winery, Defences and Surroundings at Gibeon} (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1964), 19-21. Charles E. Carter, \textit{The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study} (JSOT 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1999), 120-121.

\textsuperscript{435} The site was partially damaged at end of Iron II, but was not totally destroyed. See Carter, \textit{Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period}, 128.

After the destruction of the temple, mourners from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria were sent to Mizpah instead of Jerusalem (Jer 41:5-7). Since Mizpah may have been the capital of Judah for over a century (from the time of Gedaliah until Nehemiah), these surveys bolster the assumption that the city was a government as well as a cultic location at this time.

Oded Lipchits has done extensive research on the archaeological surveys in the settlements within Benjamin and Jerusalem. He concluded that, “the relative prosperity of this area must be attributed to the political centrality assigned to Mizpah and the economic importance of Gibeon and Mozah. The agricultural hinterland surrounded and based itself on these centers.” Even though the population in this region declined about 60%, it continued to function as an agricultural hub. Avraham Faust, however, argues that even if some refugees fled to the Benjamin region during the Babylonian siege, the archaeological surveys do not indicate that Mizpah or Gibeon flourished during the Neo-Babylonian period. According to Faust, “while some of the sites might have existed during most of the sixth century, this is not clear for all of them. Even those which appear to have existed at the time were probably in decline.” Lipschits and Faust both agree that more surveys are needed to form a more complete picture of this area. The Benjamin region may not have witnessed the level of destruction as Jerusalem and its surrounding environs in the early sixth century, but the economic infrastructure was

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439 Ibid., 365.

crippled by the Babylonian conquest. This led to a gradual decline of settlement in this area in the sixth century.

The archaeological surveys indicate that there was a significant break in settlement in Judah in the early sixth century. The region of Benjamin may have maintained some continuity, but the data is not conclusive. Furthermore, the Babylonians did not re-establish coastal ports such as Ashkelon and Ekron after assuming control over the area. Ashkelon was a wine-production center and Ekron was known for olive-oil production. Faust’s claim that Babylon was not interested in Israel’s wine and oil surplus deserves some merit.\textsuperscript{441} Either Nebuchadnezzar received his wine from closer ports to home or he was not interested in many of the viticulture “hotspots” in Judah and along the coast. Regardless of the exact reasoning, wine production continued in some places, such as Gibeon. Horticulture remained the mainstay of those who remained in the land even though many of the larger farmsteads were destroyed.

The biblical literature also highlights that agriculture as well as viticulture remained the predominant economical backbone of the region. In three separate locations the text specifies that Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Babylonian guard gave the poor of the land (the vinedressers and tillers of the soil) vineyards and fields to labor (Jer 39:10; 52:16; 2 Kgs 25:12). Cultivated land was vital to the sustenance of the population, and may or may not have been important to the Babylonian Empire. The biblical text indicates that the poor were given land as well as vineyards and the archaeological picture confirms that agriculture remained the primary livelihood of the people after the exile. Wine production in Judah was diminished to a fraction of its former size in the sixth century, but there are some indications that it was produced in a

\textsuperscript{441} Ibid., 190-93
few locations. The landscape was drastically altered by the siege and the economic and social recovery was a slow process. These circumstances altered the conceptual metaphoric expressions as well.

7.2.3 Conclusion

The Babylonian campaigns against Judah destroyed several prominent fortress towns and displaced countless people. The economic infrastructure was also deeply affected by the destruction of prominent towns and villages. Joseph Blenkinsopp provides a balanced assessment of the archaeological picture as well as the biblical portrayal of the exilic events:

> The Babylonian punitive expedition of 588-596 certainly caused significant loss of life, destruction of property, temporary interruption of economic activities and considerable ecological degradation, as had previous military incursions, but the destruction was neither indiscriminate nor total.442

Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings were razed to the ground by the Babylonian army. But there is evidence to support, “the continued existence of a considerable Israelite material culture, particularly in the area of Benjamin, but also in the Judean Hills.”443 Even though Hans Barstad’s “myth of the empty land” is not an accurate depiction of the material culture of Jerusalem post-586 B.C.E., I do agree that the region of Benjamin provides a unique glimpse of one of the few economically viable locations within Judah during the Neo-Babylonian period. Archaeological surveys focused on agricultural production would be a valuable asset to gleaning a clearer picture of the

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economy at these pivotal junctions. Hopefully, there will be a greater emphasis on this aspect of the material culture in the future.

7.3 Traces of the Vine imagery in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah

7.3.1 Introduction

The exile caused irrecoverable damage to many towns in Judah and the surrounding areas. The Jerusalem temple, the center for cultic activity, was also in ruins. The historical and psychological memory of the siege and its aftermath are illuminated in many exilic texts such as Lamentations and Ezekiel. Daniel Smith Christopher argues that, “the metaphor of imprisonment and references to places of imprisonment do not grow more plentiful during the exilic period by pure chance, especially in view of its foreignness to the Israelite judicial system.” Metaphorical expressions reflect the worldview of their authors. In this way, literature becomes a channel for ideological understandings. Therefore, the analysis of imprisonment metaphors can be a useful tool for interpreting the physical, emotional, and psychological response to the exile in the sixth century.

The metaphorical expression of the people as plants was also affected by the traumas associated with the Babylonian siege and its aftermath. Chapter six analyzed the eighth century prophetic literature, which frequently depicted the people as a vine that produced sour grapes instead of the expected crop. Viticulture was a lucrative and highly visible economic industry in the late monarchic period. It also became a useful expression for the prophetic concerns with social injustice. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as well as later writings from the book of Isaiah illustrate how the Babylonian

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exile altered the metaphorical discourse as well. Images of the people as vines shift from a highly negative association in pre-exilic writings, to a positive re-interpretation in text such as Isaiah 27. Furthermore, vine imagery decreases substantially in the post-exilic literature, but planting imagery remains a consistent representation of the people.

7.3.2 Jeremiah

The Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7) expresses, by means of a horticultural metaphor, the one-sided failure of the relationship between the Israelite people and their deity (see chapter 6.3). Many of the eighth century writing prophets adopted this image of Israel as a corrupted vine, the leadership chastised in particular (see chapter 6.4). Viticulture was a mainstay of the economy of the late monarchy, especially as a lucrative trade commodity. Even though wine drinking was a social marker associated with festivity, these prophets warned that the vintage harvest would become a time of mourning rather than feasting. The first few chapter of Jeremiah also perpetuate the association of viticulture with a corrupted people, incapable of producing the quality fruit that was expected.

Jeremiah is one of the few known prophets who experienced the Babylonian destruction of Judah firsthand before fleeing to Egypt. He prophesied during the years leading up to the exile under King Josiah, as well as several years following the final deportations (ca. 627-587 B.C.E.).\footnote{445 For a detailed bibliography of the dating of the text see, Peter C. Craigie et al., eds., Jeremiah 1-29 (WBC 26; Dallas: World Books, 1991), xlv.} Vine imagery in Jeremiah can be found in the first
twelve chapters of the book, which are usually dated before the exile (see Table D). The vine(yard) imagery in these chapters is reminiscent of the eighth century prophetic material. Either the vine(yard) is portrayed as a waste, not producing the desired grapes or YHWH is envisioned as an angry grape treader, threatening to “glean” the people. The remainder of the work does not associate the people with viticulture, but rather with trees or plants (see Tables F, G, and H). Most of the vineyards surrounding Jerusalem were destroyed in 586 B.C.E., so it is noteworthy that viticulture imagery is predominantly found in the pre-exilic portions of the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jer 2:2b-3</td>
<td>I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land now sown. Israel was holy to YHWH, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it were held guilty; disaster came upon them, says YHWH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 2:21</td>
<td>Yet I planted you as a choice vine, from the purest stock. How then did you turn degenerate and become a wild vine?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 5:10</td>
<td>Go up through her vine-rows and destroy, but do not make a full end; strip away her branches for they are not YHWH’s. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly faithless to me, says YHWH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 6:9</td>
<td>Thus says YHWH of Hosts: Glean thoroughly as a vine the remnant of Israel; like a grape-gatherer, pass your hand again over its branches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 8:13</td>
<td>When I wanted to gather them, says YHWH, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 11:17</td>
<td>YHWH of Hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you, because of the evil that the house of Israel and the house of Judah have done, provoking me to anger by making offerings to Baal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 12:2</td>
<td>You plant them, and they take root; they grow and bring forth fruit; you are near in their mouth yet far from their hearts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 12:10</td>
<td>My shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have trampled down my portion, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The second chapter of the book of Jeremiah is framed by viticulture imagery. According to the oracle, at the birth of the nation, Israel was “the first fruits” of YHWH’s harvest, set apart and holy. The relationship started off well, but quickly the vintner became disappointed with the vintage. Jeremiah 2:21 conjures several images from the Song of the Vineyard, the element of disappointment in particular: planted by YHWH (נָתָנָה), a choice vine (שֶׁרֶץ), became a wild vine (חֲדָקָה נִכְרָה). Jeremiah 8:13, 11:17, and 12:2 also show affiliations with the Song of the Vineyard, as the corruption of the people is represented as worthless fruit. The “shepherds” are named as the people responsible for destroying YHWH’s vineyard in Jer 12:10. In the Song of the Vineyard, YHWH maintains that he will destroy the vineyard himself, but the blame is placed on the ruling elite (Isa 5:8). Jeremiah 12:10 is an especially poignant passage because the text coveys YHWH’s suffering, not just his wrath. Craigie argues that, “this divine lament portrays God as also suffering because of evil, evil from the hand of his own people.” In many of the viticulture themed passages in the Hebrew Bible, YHWH’s disappointment and wrath are key components of the language. Jeremiah 12:10, however, portrays the deity’s deep loss and pain as well.

The references to viticulture in the oracles of Jeremiah echo the negative associations of viticulture found in the eighth century prophetic writings. Howard N. Wallace notes that, “the image of something life-giving and sweet can also allude to

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448 The people are referred to as YHWH’s “first fruits” in this text. There are several passages in the Hebrew Bible that command the people to give the “first fruits” of their harvest to YHWH. Cf. Exod 23:19; 34:26; Lev 23:10; Deut 18:4; 26:2, 10; Prov 3:9; Neh 10:37; 1 Chr 31:5.

449 Pss 80:7-19 also contains imagery similar to Isaiah 5.

450 Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1-29, 185.
something sinful and ultimately deadly." The vine metaphor depicting the people as the fruit of YHWH’s unmet expectations, which could have been something so pleasant, instead fuels the image of the wrath of the divine as a vengeful treader and gleaner of destruction. Jeremiah 5:10 and 6:9 illustrate this portrait of YHWH as an angry deity, determined to destroy most of his vineyard.

Post-exilic texts also attest to this motif, but the destruction is described in the past rather than a prediction of disaster. For example, Lam 1:15 states, “YHWH has trodden as in a wine press the virgin daughter Judah.” The destruction of the vineyard ended the wine drinking and the vintage singing. Even though YHWH found the grapes in the vineyard worthless, the grapes were still trodden, representing the blood of the people.

The late Judean prophecies of Jeremiah depict vine gleaning and treading as a metaphor for the impending punishment of the Jerusalemites. Many of these passages are reminiscent of the Song of the Vineyard, illustrating a choice planting that generated worthless fruit. YHWH’s disappointment and anger is a consistent theme in this material as well as his intent to destroy the vineyard. The vine imagery in Ezekiel, however, depicts the people as a corrupted and worthless at their roots.

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452 YHWH is also imagined as the divine treader stained with peoples’ blood in Jer 48:32-35 and Isa 63:1-6, but Israel is not the subject of his wrath in these instances.
7.3.3 Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel was known as a maker of riddles (Ezek 20:49). He used figurative language such as allegory and metaphor to depict the failings of the people and the loss of the land. People are portrayed as vines only three times in the book, but in each instance the imagery is negative (See Table E). The other prophetic books also unfavorably depict the people as vines, but Ezekiel attacks the vines’ very nature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vine Imagery in Ezekiel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 15:2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O mortal, how does the wood of the vine surpass all other wood-the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest? Is wood taken from to make anything? Does one take a peg from it on which to hang any object? It is put in the fire for fuel; when the fire has consumed both ends of it and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? When it was whole it was used for nothing; how much less-when the fire has consumed it, and it is charred-can it ever be used for anything! Therefore thus says the Lord God: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will set my face against them; although they escape from the fire, the fire shall not consume them; and you shall know that I am YHWH, when I set my face against them. And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 17:5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then he took a seed from the land, placed it in fertile soil; a plant by abundant waters, he set it like a willow twig. It sprouted and became a vine spreading out, but low; its branches turned toward him, its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine; it brought forth branches, put forth foliage. Then there was another great eagle, with great wings and much plumage. And see! This vine stretched out its roots toward him; it shot out its branches toward him, so that he might water it. From the bed where it was transplanted to good soil by abundant waters, so that it might produce branches and bear fruit and become a noble vine. Say: Thus says the Lord God: Will it prosper? Will he not pull up its roots, cause its fruit to rot and wither, its fresh sprouting leaves to fade? No strong arm or mighty army will be needed to pull it from its roots. When it is transplanted, will it thrive? When the east wind strikes it, will it not utterly wither, wither on the bed where it grew?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 19:10-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard transplanted by the water, fruitful and full of branches from abundant water. Its strongest stem became a ruler’s scepter; it towered aloft among the thick boughs; it stood out in its height with its mass of branches. But it was plucked up in a fury, cast down to the ground; the east wind dried it up; its fruit was stripped off, its strong stem was withered; the fire consumed it. Now it is transplanted in the wilderness, into a dry and thirsty land. And fire has gone out form its stem, has consumed its branches and fruit, so that there remains in it no strong stem, no scepter for ruling. This is a lamentation, and it is used as a lamentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table E

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453 The people are depicted as plants in other passages in the book of Ezekiel. This table depicts viticulture imagery in Ezekiel.
The representation of the nation of Israel in vine imagery in Ezekiel is highly pessimistic. For example, in Ezek 15:5 the vine is portrayed as useless from its inception. Whereas the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah depicted the people as a choice planting that eventually went astray, Ezekiel maintains that the vines’ only use from the outset was fuel for the fire. Ezekiel 15:7 does specify, however, that even though YHWH will turn his face against the people and will make the land desolate, some will escape from the fire.

Ezekiel 17:5-10 is an excerpt from an elaborate parable about two eagles and two vines. The vines described here pertain to the last kings of the Davidic line: King Jehoiachin and Zedekiah and their eventual demise. Unfortunately, the roots of these vines are weak and easily swayable. This parable is not describing the entire population as vines, but rather the two rulers are associated with vine imagery.

Jerusalem is depicted as a vine in a fruitful vineyard along abundant water in Ezek 19:10-14. Imagery from Ezekiel 15 and 17 resonate in this text. For example, the flourishing plant was plucked up and consumed by fire (Ezek 15:7 and Ezek 19:14). Furthermore, the vines in Ezekiel 17 and 19 were planted near abundant water (Ezek 17:5 and 19:10). This lament is also reminiscent of the Song of the Vineyard (Isaiah 5). If the beginning of the Song of the Vineyard is comparable to a wedding dirge, then this lament is comparable to a funeral song. This is the song that would have been sung after YHWH had destroyed his vineyard. Ezekiel 19:10-14 is a poignant and descriptive passage about the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

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Vine imagery in Ezekiel is reflective of the cultural climate of the early sixth century B.C.E. The destruction of Judah, but Jerusalem in particular, impacted Ezekiel’s writings. Just as Isaiah 5 predicted the demolition of the vineyard in graphic imagery, Ezekiel 19 chronicles and laments the outcome of its destruction. The loss of the monarchy, the loss of the city, and the loss of the temple, were all valid reasons to lament.

7.3.4 Isaiah 27:1-6

Isaiah 27:1-6 comprises a section of a larger work, the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 24-27). These chapters have been labeled “textually challenging,” yet there is agreement among scholars that this material assimilates older patterns into its contemporary outlook. Canaanite mythical language is evident in the first verse.


456 See Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27*, 2, for a list of scholarship. This text does not show all the features of the apocalyptic genre. A growing consensus suggests that the title “apocalypse” should be abandoned. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 346, for an analysis of what sections of this passage are apocalyptic in nature and which are not.

Isaiah 27:1-6

[Hebrew text]

455
456
On that day YHWH with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan
The fleeing serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.

On that day:
A pleasant vineyard, sing about it:
I, YHWH, am its keeper; every moment I water it.
I guard it night and day so that no one can harm it.
I have no wrath.
If it gives me thorns and briers, I will march to battle against it.
I will burn it up.
Or else let it cling to me for protection,
Let it make peace with me, let it make peace with me.
In the days to come, Jacob shall take root,
Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots,
And fill the whole world with fruit.

This hymn represents a merger of the divine combat motif with a radical
reinterpretation of the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7). In ancient thought, the powers of
chaos were never completely at bay. Therefore, at periodic intervals, the deity had to
battle primordial waters or creatures to bring order to the delicate ecosystem once
again. The creation of the world in Genesis 1 and the defeat of Yam in Exodus 15
typify two of these moments. Isaiah 27, however, envisions a future battle in which
YHWH will slay the Leviathan once and for all. According to Michael Fishbane:

Biblical versions link the prototypical conflict at the beginning of the world
(Urzeit) with its recurrence within the sacred history of Israel during the exodus

457 See Jon D. Levenson, Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence
from Egypt, and its anticipated recurrence in new forms thereafter, up to and including the final defeat of the sea in the future (Endzeit)."

This mythical structure to time is not isolated to the earliest strands of biblical poetry, but is also visible in many Isaianic writings grappling with the exile and the destruction of the temple.

The mythopoetic elements characterizing YHWH as the divine warrior and storm-god is prominent in the book of Isaiah (cf. Isa 24:19-23; 27:1; 34:1-4, 8-10; 42:13-15; 50:2; 59:16-19). These images are usually drawn from the ancient hymns, but they are accompanied by prophecies of a new creation as well. Even though the redactors of biblical literature aimed to portray YHWH as different from his ancient Near Eastern counterparts, his repeated characterization as a warrior and storm-god argue to the contrary. This earliest portrait of YHWH was an anchor, a memory of a powerful deity that chose a group of people and planted them in a bountiful land.

The idea of a new creation in Isaiah 27 is further highlighted by the inclusion of an adaptation of the Song of the Vineyard within this material. Isaiah 5 recounts the creation and destruction of a beautiful vineyard. The song in Isaiah 27, however, stands in an “antithetical relationship” to the Song of the Vineyard. The vineyard is no longer an object of distain, but rather a source of pride and hope: 1) YHWH is identified from the beginning as the keeper of the vineyard (v. 3). 2) Instead of withholding the rain (Isa 5:6b), he waters it constantly (v. 3). 3) His presence is there day and night, diligently guarding the vines (v. 3). 4) There is no need for a watchtower (migdal) because YHWH

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459 Divine warrior/storm-god imagery also appears in Job 26:5-14; 38:1-4; Zech 9:14

himself is its protector. 4) Finally, the text specifies that YHWH feels no wrath (v. 4).

In this song, the future of Israel is likened to a blossoming plant that will produce enough fruit to fill the entire world. The return of the divine to Israel will bring forth the slaying of the Leviathan, the planting of the people back in the land, and the land itself will also benefit from this renewal.

The divine treader as a destroyer and slayer of the people is not an image that this song wants to convey. Instead, divine protector and healer is the tone of the passage. All other ‘thorns and briers’ are warned to make peace with this vineyard or war will be waged against them (v. 4-5). The thorns and briers may refer to Israel or to foreign nations, but ultimately, YHWH desires a peace offering with the people.461

Isaiah 27 marks a distinct change in vine imagery portrayal, as the destruction of the Isaiah 5 vineyard was interpreted in conjunction with the destruction of Judah in 586 B.C.E. Even though there are not many references to viticulture in post-exilic texts, it is interesting that this passage attempts to reverse negative vine imagery that was so prevalent in the centuries leading up to the exile. As Kristen Nielsen notes, “it is an extension of the original vineyard song,” but it also represents a “change of rhythm.”462 The original vineyard song ended with the threat of destruction and desolation. Therefore, the Song of the Vineyard was re-written to include the survivors of the destroyed vineyard. The restoration of the covenantal community is clearly present in Isaiah 27 as YHWH says he will have compassion on his ‘pleasant vineyard’ and promises that this vineyard will produce a harvest that will feed the entire world. This group will “return

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461 ‘Thorns and briers’ is the only terminology shared by the two passages (6:6 and 27:4). For echoes of Isaiah 5 in Isaiah 27, see Wallace, “Harvesting the Vineyard,” 4.

462 Kristen Nielsen, There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah (JSOTSup 65; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 117.
with singing” (Isa 51:11) and inhabit a new vineyard where YHWH is constantly present. The people’s hopeful future is represented as a fruitful and productive plant, rather than a worthless, bitter grape.

7.3.5 Conclusion to Vine Imagery

Vine imagery in the early oracles of Jeremia reflect the cynical representation of the people as corrupted vines in eighth century prophetic literature. The Ezekiel vine passages illustrate deep loss, both the loss of rulership and homeland. Isaiah 27, however, offers a glimpse of a renewed and flourishing vineyard, which YHWH will plant once again. Here, a post-exilic text draws on earlier images (Isaiah 5), in order to re-interpret the people as vineyards for a new community. One of the motifs that arise out of the interpretative tradition is the contrasting of planting and up-rooting imagery. This is especially apparent in the book of Jeremiah and frames a large portion of the text.

7.4 Up-rooting and Destroying versus Building and Planting

7.4.1 Up-rooting and Destroying

The destruction of Jerusalem as well as other prominent Judean towns in the early sixth century altered the landscape of the land. Countless vineyards were destroyed, especially in the terraced hills surrounding Jerusalem. The prophecies of Judah’s destruction and doom were often likened to the destruction of a vineyard. The vineyard was a prized commodity providing fruit to eat and wine to drink, as well as a source of supplemental income. Uprooted and destroyed vineyards were not a part of the landscape
of the late Judean monarchy. Instead, vast hillsides were lined with vines awaiting the harvest season.

Prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel witnessed firsthand the destruction of the thriving wine industry in most parts of Judah. They were present when siege warfare led to the uprooting, destruction, and eventual burning of prized vineyards. Granted, the Babylonian army may have spared more vineyards than the Assyrian armies before them, but the archaeological evidence confirms that the agricultural sector was severly crippled by the Babylonian warfare. The book of Jeremiah, in particular, develops a specific planting motif: YHWH as the planter and builder as well as YHWH as the up-rooter and destroyer.\footnote{Else K. Holt argues that, “these chain of verbs characterize the book of Jeremiah more than anything else.” Holt, “Word of Jeremiah-Word of God: Structures of Authority in the Book of Jeremiah,” in Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen (ed. J. E. Goldingay; New York/London: T&T Clark, 2007), 177.} The prophecies pertaining to Judah’s demise depict YHWH as the up-rooter and destroyer, whereas the prophecies pertaining to the restoration of Judah depict YHWH as the planter and builder (see Tables F and G).

| Deut 29:28 | YHWH uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is now the case. |
| Jer 1:10 | See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. |
| Jer 12:14-15 | Thus says YHWH concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage that I have given my people Israel to inherit: I am about to pluck them up from their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them. |
| Jer 18:7-10 | At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. |
| Jer 45:4 | Thus says YHWH: I am going to break down what I have built, and pluck up what I have planted-that is, the whole land. |
| Pss 80:7-9, 12 | Restore us, of God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? |

Table F
Jeremiah’s call (Jer 1:10) is enshrouded in planting imagery. He is commanded to pluck up, to pull down, to destroy, and to overthrow as well as to build and to plant. YHWH specifies that he plucks up and destroys any nation that is deemed evil (Jer 18:7), and Judah is described as one of these nations in Jeremiah 12:14-15. If the nation turns from evil, however, he has the power to change the outcome (Jer 18:8). Just as the Judahites are depicted as a ravaged vineyard in Isaiah 5 and various places in the book of Jeremiah, so too the destructive nature of planting imagery is used to portray the removal of the people from the land.

Not only were the people uprooted because of divine fury, but the wildlife and landscape suffered as well. The contrast between divine favor and prosperity versus divine wrath and drought, further illustrates the ancient Israelite worldview (see Illustration 12). Human were thought to either bring order or disorder to the natural world, depending upon their actions as stipulated in the covenant. If the people followed the commandments, the land and people prospered, if they did not follow the commandments, drought and exile ensued. Deuteronomy 28:63 describes what will happen if the people fail to follow the covenants stipulated in the treaty formulae: “and just as YHWH took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so YHWH will delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess.” Jeremiah pleaded with the people to change their ways using

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464 For example, the land was not able to yield produce after the murder of Abel (Gen 4:11-12) and after Saul murdered the Gibeonites there was a three year famine (2 Sam 21:1-14). According to Moshe Weinfeld, “Desolation of the land (= dryness) is due to breaking the covenant,” either shedding blood on the land or due to adultery, theft, taking a false oath, etc. Weinfeld, The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 191.

465 For more information on curses and Deuteronomy 28 see Hans U. Steymans, Deuteronomium 28 Und Di Adê Zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons (Universitätsverlag Freiberg Schweiz: Vandenhoeck &
planting curse imagery from Deuteronomy, but eventually the uprooting took place (Deut 29:28 specifies the uprooting eventually happened).

The association of covenant breaking as tied deeply to the health of the land is not unique to biblical literature. For example, the Treaty of Sefire (eighth century B.C.E.) depicts an agreement between two rulers, the king of Katak and the king of Arpad. If the treaty were to be broken, the stipulations state that the land itself would be cursed: “for seven years may the locust devour (Arpad), and for seven years may the worms eat…may the grass not come forth, so that no green may be seen.”466 Since agriculture was the mainstay of the economy, curse imagery against land production would have resonated strongly with the people. These treaty agreements illustrate the reciprocal relationship between maintaining treaty agreements and the health of the land.

The people’s lack of concern for the covenantal treaty is stated over and over again in the prophetic literature as the reason for their ‘uprooting’ from the land.467 Yet, this forced migration did not only affect the people. The land itself suffered because of the discretions of the people: “I looked on the earth, and lo, it was a waste and void…I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before YHWH, before his fierce anger (Jer 4:23a, 26).” Divine obedience led to prosperity and a fruitful land whereas divine disobedience led to waste and void, the status of the earth before YHWH planted the garden in Genesis 2.

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467 Cf. Isa 24:4ff; 38:8ff; Jer 23:10
7.4.2 Building and Planting

Just as YHWH had the ability to uproot and destroy, he had the capability to build and re-plant what had been damaged. The book of Jeremiah utilizes the ‘uprooting’ motif as a vivid warning of impending doom. Once the people are literally uprooted from the land, however, this imagery is reversed. The exiles are promised a new planting back in their land, where they will never be removed from again (see Table G).

To plant (ָּּבִּלִּי) or (ָּּבִּלִּי) and to build (ָּּבִּלִּי), to sow (ָּּבִּלִּי)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amos 9:15</td>
<td>I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says YHWH your God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 17:7-8</td>
<td>Blessed are those who trust in YHWH, who trust in YHWH. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 24:5-7</td>
<td>Thus says YHWH, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am YHWH; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 31:27-28</td>
<td>The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will sow the house of Israel and house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says YHWH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 32:40-41</td>
<td>I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 42:10</td>
<td>If you will only remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I have brought upon you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 36:36</td>
<td>Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, YHWH, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, YHWH, have spoken, and I will do it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table G

Re-planting the people in the land included a reversal of judgment and a promise of an “everlasting covenant.” The land was desolate for a period of time, but now it is ready for a new planting. Just as the harvest cycle begins anew each year, the cycle of
creation will begin once again. These oracles initiate a process that, according to Matthews, “designed to prepare for the creation of a new, cleansed world.” In Psalm 80, the psalmist repeatedly pleads with the divine to turn his face once again towards the vine, his people. In the new cleansed world, YHWH once again has his eyes set on the people because they now fear him (Jer 24:7; 32:40). The future planting is assured divine favor and presence as well as a rebuilt homeland.

**7.4.3 Conclusion to Up-rooting and Planting**

Planting imagery serves many functions in the Hebrew Bible. When plants are used to signify the people, the images can have both negative and positive connotations. Job Y. Jindo argues that, “the function of these plant images is usually understood to be illustrative or emotive, making the destruction scenes more vivid and engaging so as to appeal to the emotions of the audience.” Both the destruction scenes and the restoration scenes appeal to the emotions of the audience. The books of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel utilize metaphor reversals. The people are depicted as either worthless vines/plants in need of uprooting or lush vines/plants re-planted in a vineyard/garden oasis, carefully guarded by YHWH. In this way, planting metaphor reversal became one of the preoccupations of the prophetic writings after the exile.

Vine imagery is not as apparent in the post-exilic writings as the pre-exilic, in part because many agricultural areas in Judah were destroyed in 586 B.C.E. Wine continued to be manufactured in the Transjordan, but the use of viticulture as a metaphor would not have been as readily accessible in the local landscape in the decades following the exile.

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468 Matthews and Benjamin, *The Social World of Ancient Israel*, 204.

The book of Ezekiel utilizes very little vine imagery, aside from chapters fifteen, seventeen, and nineteen. The biblical texts that portray the returnees as plants do not often employ vine imagery. Instead, the people are compared to a branch/shoot in a divine garden.

7.5 Restoration Imagery

“Save us, O YHWH our God, gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise” (Pss 106:47).

The metaphorical depiction of plants and trees representing the restored community resonates in several exilic passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah (see Table H). The surviving “remnant” is described in garden imagery and the Garden of Eden is evoked as a future description of the nation of Israel. Vine imagery is no longer present, except for one passage in Zechariah. Branches, rather than vines, depict the restored community and these branches are known for their abundant fruit.

The one constant is that YHWH himself plants the people once again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A righteous branch (צדקתי צמח), remnant (امية צמח), shoot (צרא), Garden of Eden (גן עדן), planting of YHWH (сад 또한 המים)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jer 23:3, 5-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jer 33:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezek 17:22-23</td>
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<td>Ezek 28:25-26a</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 36:8</td>
<td>But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot out your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they shall soon come home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 36:35-36</td>
<td>This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified. Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, YHWH, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, YHWH, have spoken, and I will do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 4:2</td>
<td>On that day the branch of YHWH shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 11:1</td>
<td>A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 36:35-36</td>
<td>The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 51:3</td>
<td>For YHWH will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of YHWH; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 58:11-12</td>
<td>YHWH will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 60:21</td>
<td>Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever. They are the shoot that I planted, the work of my hands, so that I might be glorified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 61:3b-4</td>
<td>They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of YHWH, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeph 3:13</td>
<td>The remnant of Israel; they shall do not wrong and utter no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. Then they will pasture and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zech 8:12</td>
<td>For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Chr 7:9</td>
<td>I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall wear them down no more, as they did formerly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table H

There are several themes that emerge in restoration planting imagery. First of all, the two passages in Jeremiah depict a “righteous branch,” one that will execute justice and righteousness in the land, possibly referring to a future Davidic king.⁴⁷⁰ Singing and dancing, weddings, and thank offerings are mentioned in conjunction with a restored

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temple and a restored monarchy (Jer 33:11). Secondly, the Ezekiel passages emphasize that it is YHWH who is going to gather the people and re-plant them back in the land. Before this can happen, however, the land itself will transform from a desolate wasteland into a garden oasis like the Garden of Eden. The prophecies of Isaiah also draw on garden imagery, referring to Israel as: the garden of YHWH (51:3), a well watered garden (58:11), and the planting of YHWH (61:3). Furthermore, allusions to the Song of the Vineyard resonate in Zech 8:12. In contrast to the old vineyard, the new vineyard will produce abundant fruit, the sky will produce rain, and the remnant will possess this vineyard. Finally, 1 Chr 7:9 states that the remnant will no longer be disturbed and Isa 60:21 maintains that they will possess the land forever.

There is a noticeable change in tone from exilic and post-exilic planting imagery compared to vine/plant imagery of the late monarchy. Instead of the vine representing disappointment and injustice, the plant/branch becomes a symbol of a devoted and righteous people. Garden imagery, but more specifically, divine garden imagery, becomes a positive metaphorical expression in restoration texts. Thus, planting imagery is able to remain a representation of the people without conjuring up the negative associations of the past.

Garden imagery functions as a symbol of hope, a “contrast world” to the current situation of the exiled population. T. Stordahlen recently surveyed evidence of the Eden Garden narrative (Gen 2-3) in biblical literature. One of the aims of this study was to

demonstrate that there are a significant number of biblical texts that either mention Eden Garden or allude to the story. According to Stordalen, the primary location of these references occurred, “especially in prophetic and sapiential circles, at least from the Sixth Century BCE. From early Jewish literature it is clear that the topic remained popular for several centuries.”472 Interestingly, divine planting imagery in this time period also utilizes mythological motifs from early hymns, particularly those that portray YHWH as the storm-god/warrior and defeater of chaos.

Paul Hanson and Frank Moore Cross argue that myth is reintroduced in the sixth century in order to add a proto-apocalyptic dimension.473 While I agree that mythic material is present in the post-exilic prophecy, I do not agree that this is a reintroduction. The characterization of YHWH as the storm-god warrior is a persistent theme in pre-exilic prophetic literature as well. The Song of the Vineyard and other eighth century prophetic texts attest to the consistent portrayal of the divine as a warrior and controller of the natural world, while at the same time, involved in the affairs of the people (see chapter 6.3 and 6.4).474 The early representation of YHWH as a planter and storm-god warrior in texts such as the Song of the Sea is ingrained into the framework of the biblical story. Therefore, the fusion of the combat myth with the interpretation of the restoration as a “new exodus” is hardly surprising.


474 Hanson argues that the divine combat myths are absent from pre-exilic prophecy, but he does note that there are several psalms that display this imagery throughout biblical history: e.g., Pss 2: 1-11; 9: 6-13; 24:1-10; 29:3-11; 46: 2-12; 47: 2-10; 48:5-15; 65:6-13; 68:1-20; 76:4-13; 77:17-21; 89:6-19; 97:1-9; 104:1-35; 106:9-13; 110: 1-7; 1-9. See Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 303-10.
Isaiah 51 is a quintessential example of a prophetic oracle drawing on motifs from early hymns to contrast the characterization of the people before and after the exile.¹

Divine conquest imagery, the justice and righteousness motif, the angry vintner, and eschatological themes are all integrated in this passage.

Isaiah 51:1-23

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek YHWH. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.

For YHWH will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of YHWH; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples.

I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

Listen to me, you who know righteousness, you people who have my teaching in your hearts; do not fear the reproach of others, and do not be dismayed when they revile you.

For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but my deliverance will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of YHWH!

Awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago! Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?

Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?

So the ransomed of YHWH shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

I, I am he who comforts you; why then are you afraid of a mere mortal who must die, a human being who fades like grass?

You have forgotten YHWH, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. You fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction. But where is the fury of the oppressor?

The oppressed shall speedily be released; they shall not die and go down to the Pit, nor shall they lack bread.

For I am YHWH your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—YHWH of hosts is his name.

I have put my words in your mouth, and hidden you in the shadow of my hand, stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, “You are my people.”

Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of YHWH, the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering.

There is no one to guide her among all the children she has borne; there is no one to take her by the hand among all the children she has brought up.

These two things have befallen you—who will grieve with you?—devastation and destruction, famine and sword—who will comfort you?

Your children have fainted, they lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of YHWH,
Therefore hear this, you who are wounded, who are drunk, but not with wine:

Thus says your Sovereign, YHWH, your God who pleads the cause of his people:
See, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; you shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath.

And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you, “Bow down, that we may walk on you”; and you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to walk on.

In an attempt to highlight the new attitude of the restored community as well as of YHWH himself, Isa 51:1-23 displays a myriad of themes gleaned from earlier prophetic literature. For example: 1) the eighth century prophets admonished the people for their lack of justice and righteousness (see chapter 6.3.2.5). In Isa 51:1, however, the remnant is characterized as a people who pursue righteousness and carry the just teachings of YHWH on their hearts. 2) Angry YHWH is depicted as a grape treading, blood stomping deity in early prophetic literature (see chapter 6.3.2.4). In Isa 51:17, 21, he affirms that they will not longer drink from the bowl of his wrath. 3) The Song of the Vineyard describes the planted people as a desert wasteland where no one lives (see chapter 6.3.2.4). On the contrary, Isa 5:3 envisions the land as a new creation, the garden of YHWH, lush and filled with joy. 4) Isa 27:1 imagined a futuristic era when YHWH would come and defeat the Leviathan dragon once and for all (see chapter 7.3.4). Isaiah 51:9, however, reminds the people that YHWH was the one who pierced the dragon and cut Rahab into pieces. 5) Finally, allusions to the Song of the Sea are meant to conjure the persona of YHWH as a divine warrior and storm-god (Isa 51:10).

Jeremy Hutton recently wrote an article on Isaiah 51 and the purposeful use of mythic material in post-exilic prophetic texts. He argues that the tension between myth and history is not as prevalent as was once assumed by scholars such as Paul Hanson.
Instead, the prophet was aiming to convey an ideological purpose, namely that, “Yahweh’s action is present in the everyday, the mundane, and the quotidian, in powerful and surprising ways.” By commanding Jerusalem ‘to rouse itself’ (v. 17) and reminding the people that YHWH’s word is instilled in them (v. 16), the people are called to play an active part in the restoration process. The combat myth is conjured as an example of YHWH’s great power and dominance, but the post-exilic community is also expected to exhibit changed behavior as well.

The divine warrior/storm-god imagery is evoked once again as a reminder of the great deeds of past, while images of an idyllic garden oasis become a symbol of the future habitation. In this way, restoration imagery provides a synthesis of Israel’s mythological past while laying the groundwork for the apocalyptic features of future writings. According to Cross, Isaiah 51 is an excellent example of this new synthesis, “in which the old exodus is described in terms of the Creation myth and in turn becomes the archetype of a new exodus.” The new exodus also prominently features the people as a planting of YHWH and Zion is often cited as the location of the re-planting.

The movement from Yahweh as the planter of the nation of Israel to Yahweh as the planter of a remnant of righteousness that will possess the land forever, is an expression that many post-biblical authors drew on to legitimize their own worldview. The exile resulted in a loss of nationhood as well as a destroyed temple. Even though the temple was eventually rebuilt, the political and religious sectors did not resemble their former glory. The roots of apocalyptic eschatology emerged from this disillusioned and

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476 Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 144.
discontented context. Isaiah 51 is considered an early example of an attempt to reconcile the past with the future. One of the characteristics of Jewish eschatology is that *Endzeit* is depicted as a return to *Urzeit*. The primeval beginnings, linked to a garden oasis, become the futuristic depictions of a ‘righteous planting’ in the remnant imagery. As the people returned to the land, the scriptures portray not only a gardner/vintner who is ready to resume care of his vineyard, but it is guaranteed to be a bountiful harvest.

7.6 Conclusion

The destruction of Judah in the early sixth century altered the physical landscape of the region. The once vibrant and lush hillsides, lined with vines, were torched and left desolate. The inhabitants were exiled, executed, or fled the area. Many of the exilic and post-exilic writings reflect the trama of these events. The metaphor of YHWH as the vintner and the people as vines continues to be portrayed in an unfavorable light in the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah 27, however, re-interprets this metaphor to reflect the future restoration of the people. The book of Jeremiah also utilizes planting imagery to convey YHWH’s ability to plant as well as to uproot. The metaphorical expression of the people as plants is a theme in early biblical literature, yet it continues to evolve with the changing circumstances of the people. Although the image of the people

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477 According to Hanson, there are three primary factors that led to development of apocalyptic eschatology from earlier prophetic roots: “1) the self-identification of its protagonists with the classical prophetic tradition, 2) their following the lead of Second Isaiah in appropriating archaic league and royal mythopoetic material, but beginning to interpret it with a literalness which was carefully avoided by Second Isaiah, 3) a setting in a crisis-ridden post-exilic community struggling to adjust to the loss of nationhood and tremulous under a new threat to the unity of the community in the form of a growing schism between two factions, one visionary, the other hierocratic.” Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 9-10.

as vines and YHWH as the vintner is typically negative, the re-emergence of planting imagery in the exilic literature portrays the remnant that returns, favorably.

Restoration imagery portrays an idyllic utopia where the human world and the natural world live in harmony. The people, who were once greedy and unjust, are depicted as walking in the ways of YHWH. Therefore, the ecosystem returns to a balanced state of equilibrium and the land flourishes.\textsuperscript{479} A group of people, the remnant, then return and become the ideal plantation that they were destined to be in the first place. Isaiah 51 encapsulates these images fully as YHWH promises to comfort all the waste places so that they may become the garden of YHWH, full of joy and song.

In an era of uncertainty about the future restoration of the temple and the monarchy, divine garden imagery became a literary motif beginning in the sixth century. Postbiblical texts in the Second Temple period and the sectarian works at Qumran display this literary motif as well (see Excursus 1 and 2). In this way, divine planting imagery was continuously re-interpreted to represent the social, religious, and ideological concerns of the current generation.

\textsuperscript{479} This is reflective of the ancient Israelite worldview (see Illustration 6).
Excursus 1: Pseudepigrapha References to the Divine as Planter/People as Plants

The present study on metaphor in the Hebrew Bible has demonstrated that metaphorical discourse is a reflection of the cultural milieu. Therefore, the study of specific metaphors in a culture at a particular time should reveal some of the pressing concerns of that group. The Pseudepigrapha provides a rich resource for the social, historical, and cultural concerns of early Judaism (ca. 250 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.).

This literature was highly influenced by biblical material as unknown authors assumed, “under a false name,” the persona of famous biblical men such as Abraham, Moses, David, and Enoch. These authors anonymously expressed ideological concerns, often by recognizing biblical motifs and attributing these to their current situation.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E forever changed Israel’s political identity and caused a rift in the religious tradition as well. Even once the Jews returned to the land and the temple was rebuilt, the circumstances were not ideal. Martien Halvorson-Taylor’s recent work on the metaphorization of exile argues that, “the exile signified not only forced migration and living in a foreign land under foreign domination, but also a variety of alienations: political disenfranchisement within Yehud, deep dissatisfaction with the status quo, and a feeling of separation from God.”

The dissatisfaction with the political situation and certain aspects of temple worship underlie the social context of the Pseudepigrapha literature.


Extraction as well as interpretation of metaphorical mappings found within biblical literature is one of the ways that post-exilic Jewish groups articulated their worldview. I agree with Bill Schniedewind that, in antiquity, “exegesis and interpretation were drawn especially to texts that were theologically or politically charged.”\textsuperscript{482} This is commonly referred to as “attraction.” The planting metaphor apparent in several highly charged texts such as Exodus 15, Isaiah 5, and the plucking imagery from Jeremiah, were re-interpreted and applied to existent social concerns. Neil Fujita, who wrote a detailed analysis of the planting metaphor in this time period, argues that, “the metaphorical notion of the plant provides the Jewish authors of the intertestamental period with rich symbolism for their ideological assertions.”\textsuperscript{483} These ideological assertions delineate a specific group as a righteous and holy rather than the people as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Pseudepigrapha</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 En. 62:8</td>
<td>The congregation of the holy ones shall be planted, and all the elect ones shall stand before him.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Bar. 32:2-7</td>
<td>Zion will be shaken in order that it will be rebuilt. That building will not remain; but it will again be uprooted after some time and will remain desolate for a time. And after that it is necessary that it will be renewed in glory and that it will be perfected into eternity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jub. 1:15b-16</td>
<td>When they seek me with all their heart and with all their soul, I shall reveal them an abundance of peace in righteousness. And will all my heart and with all my soul I shall transplant them as a righteous plant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jub. 7:34</td>
<td>And now, my children, hear and do justice and righteousness so that you might be planted in righteousness on the surface of the whole earth, and your honor may be lifted up before my God who saved me from the water of the Flood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jub. 12:4</td>
<td>Worship the God of heaven, who sends down rain and dew upon the earth, and who makes everything by his word, and all life is in his presence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jub. 15:28</td>
<td>And you commanded the sons of Israel and let them keep this sign of the covenant for their generations for an eternal ordinance. And they will not be uprooted and be transplanted from the land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jub. 15:34</td>
<td>And great wrath from YHWH will be upon the sons of Israel because they have left his covenant and have turned aside from his words. They have made themselves gentiles to be removed and be uprooted from the land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jub. 17b-18</td>
<td>But from the sons of Isaac one would become a holy seed and he would not be counted</td>
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\textsuperscript{483} Fujita, “The Metaphor of Plant in Jewish Literature,” 44.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture Reference</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jub. 16:26</td>
<td>among the nations because he would become the portion of the Most High and <strong>all his seed</strong> would fall by lot into that which God will rule so that he might become a people belonging to YHWH, a special possession from all people, and so that he might become a kingdom of priests and a holy people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jub. 21:22</td>
<td>And he (Abraham) blessed his Creator who created him in his generation because by his will he created him for he knew and he perceived that from him there would be a <strong>righteous planting</strong> for <strong>eternal generations</strong> and a <strong>holy seed</strong> for him so that he might be like the one whom made everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jub. 21:24</td>
<td>Be careful not to walk in their ways, and to tread in their path, or to commit a mortal sin before God Most High so that he will hide his face from you, and deliver you into the power of your sin, and <strong>uproot you</strong> from the earth, and <strong>your seed</strong> from beneath the sky, and your name and <strong>seed</strong> will perish from all the earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jub. 21:24</td>
<td>And he will bless you in all your deeds, and he will raise up from you a <strong>righteous plant</strong> in all the earth throughout all the generations of the earth; and my name and your name shall not cease from beneath heaven forever.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Esdr. 8:77-79</td>
<td>(Isaac’s farewell): Remember, my sons, YHWH, the God of Abraham, your father, so that he might multiply you and <strong>increase your seed</strong> like the stars of heaven with regard to number and so that he will <strong>plant</strong> you on the earth as a <strong>righteous planting</strong> which will <strong>not be uprooted</strong> for all the eternal generations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Esdr. 5:23-25, 27-28</td>
<td>I said, “O Sovereign YHWH, from every forest of the earth and from all its trees you have <strong>chosen one vine</strong>, and form all the lands of the world you have chosen for yourself one region, and from all the flowers of the world you have chosen for yourself one lily, and from all the depths of the sea you have filled for yourself one river, and from all the cities that have been built you have consecrated <strong>Zion</strong> for yourself…and from all the multitude of peoples you have gotten for yourself one people; and to this people, whom you have loved, you have given the law that is approved. And now, O YHWH, why have you handed the one over to the many, and dishonored the one <strong>root</strong> beyond the others, and scattered your only one among the many?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Esdr. 9:20-22</td>
<td>So I considered my world, and saw that it was lost. I saw that my earth was in peril because of the devices of those who had come into it. And I saw and spared some with great difficulty, and saved for myself <strong>one grape</strong> out of a cluster, and <strong>one plant</strong> out of a great forest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ode of Solomon 38:17-21</td>
<td>For I was established and lived and was saved, and my foundations were laid on account of the Lord’s hand; because <strong>he planted me</strong>. For he set the <strong>root</strong>, and <strong>watered it</strong> and <strong>adapted it</strong> and <strong>blessed it</strong>, and <strong>its fruits</strong> will be <strong>forever</strong>. It <strong>penetrated deeply</strong> and <strong>sprang up and spread out</strong>, and it was full and was enlarged. And the Lord alone was praised, in <strong>his planting</strong> and in <strong>his cultivation</strong>; in <strong>his care</strong> and in the blessing of his lips, in the <strong>beautiful planting</strong> of <strong>his right hand</strong>; and in the attainment of <strong>his planting</strong>, and in the understanding of his mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ode of Solomon II 11:14-19</td>
<td>My eyes were enlightened and my face received the <strong>dew</strong>; and my breath was refreshed by the <strong>pleasant fragrance</strong> of the Lord. And he took me to his Paradise, wherein is the wealth of the Lord’s pleasure. I contemplated <strong>blooming and fruit-bearing trees</strong>, and self-grown was their crown. Their <strong>branches</strong> were <strong>flourishing</strong> and their <strong>fruits</strong> were <strong>shining</strong>; their <strong>roots</strong> were from an immortal land. And a <strong>river of gladness</strong> was <strong>irrigating</strong> them, and the region round about them in the land of eternal life. Then I adored the Lord because of his magnificence. And I said, blessed, O Lord, are they who are <strong>planted</strong> in your land, and who have a place in your Paradise; and who <strong>grow</strong> in the growth of your <strong>trees</strong>, and have passed from darkness into light.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Pss. Sol. 14:1-5 | The Lord is faithful to those who truly love him, to those who endure his discipline, in the Law, which he has commanded for our life. The Lord’s devout shall live by it forever; the }
The references to planting imagery in the Pseudepigrapha largely follow the pattern established in the biblical literature, the post-exilic restoration imagery in particular. The people are depicted as a ‘righteous planting’ that will not be plucked up again, which is reminiscent of the uprooting/planning motif from Jeremiah (see 7.4.1 and 7.4.2). Furthermore, these texts specify that the righteous planting only belong to a specific group of people, the holy ones (1 Enoch 62:8). These holy people are characteristic of the remnant of people described in Jeremiah and Isaiah, a righteous and just group (Jer 23:5-6; 33:15; Isa 60:21; 61:3b-4). 2 Esdras highlights the vine as the particular plant that YHWH chose, but just as in prophetic literature, the vine is characterized as a disappointment. The other texts depict planting imagery comparable to biblical restoration planting imagery.

An entire monograph could be written on the planting metaphor in early Judaism, so only a glimpse of the ideological tensions apparent in Enoch and Jubilees will have to suffice at present:

Comparison of planting imagery in Enoch and Jubilees:

Besides YHWH, there are only two other individuals who are labeled as “planters” in the Hebrew Bible: Noah and Abraham. Noah is depicted as “a man of the soil” and the first person to plant a vineyard in Gen 9:20. Furthermore, Abraham planted a tree in Gen 21:33 and called on God. This is noteworthy because the books of Enoch

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Translation taken from, Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 222
and *Jubilees* draw on these two individuals to develop their concept of planting as reflecting a specific group of people.

For example, in *1 Enoch* 10:16, YHWH sends a messenger to warn Noah about the upcoming flood so that “he may save his life and escape for all time; and from a plant shall be planted and established for all generations forever.” Furthermore, the descendants of Noah are considered the righteous plant in *1 Enoch*. In *Jubilees* 36:6, however, it is the descendants of Abraham whom God would plant in the earth as a ‘righteous plant.’ *Jubilees* 1:16-17 also refers to a “righteous plant” and draws heavily from the imagery of Exodus 15:17: “I shall transplant them as a righteous plant...And I shall build my sanctuary in their midst, and I shall dwell with them; I shall be their God and they will be my people, truly and rightly.” Thus, the lineage of the righteous planting stems from either Noah or Abraham and becomes a symbol of the true followers of YHWH.

In pre-exilic literature that people as a whole are depicted as YHWH’s planting. Post-exilic texts, however, delineate a remnant of people as the planting. According to Fujita, “both in First Enoch and Jubilees the rise of the righteous plant constitutes one of the most important component events in God’s plan of world history.” The seed of this plant becomes the heirs to a holy seed that will be planted in a garden oasis for eternity. The brief discussion on planting metaphor in Enoch and Jubilees illustrates a few of the ideological concerns of the late Second Temple period. A detailed analysis of early

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485 Quoted from M. Black *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (SVTP; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 30.


Jewish planting imagery would yield a host of comparisons, as well as peculiarities within this corpus of literature.
Excursus 2: Dead Sea Scroll References to the Divine as Planter/People as Plants

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the spring of 1947 unearthed a vast corpus of new material dated to the last few centuries of the Second Temple period. These scrolls provide a unique picture of a sectarian group, removed from popular society by choice, in protest to the corruption of the Temple Cult. Most of the “sectarian” literature found at Qumran is preoccupied with the interpretation of Scripture. The community was involved in a journey to reveal the “mysteries” hidden within Scripture.

These ancient biblical interpreters looked for common motifs and vocabulary to link concepts and ideologies together. The Qumran leaders and scholars believed that the authoritative source of interpretation was divine revelation to selected persons. According to 1QHab. 2:8-9, God gave understanding to interpret the prophetic word to the Priest (Teacher of Righteousness). This kind of inspired interpretation is never called ‘prophecy’ at Qumran and the teacher is never called a ‘prophet.’ Armin Lange calls this phenomenon, “divinatory hermeneutics.” Another appropriate name for this idea

488 For a detailed account of the various scrolls found at Qumran and their ideology, there are a number of anthologies. See, James C. VanderKam, The Dead Sea Scrolls Today (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010). Lawrence H. Schiffman, Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library at Qumran (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994). These two works provide an introduction to the discoveries, as well as pertinent information regarding the last fifty years of research on the scrolls.

489 For an analysis of which compositions are considered “sectarian” at Qumran, see Carol A. Newsom, “‘Sectually Explicit’ Literature from Qumran,” in The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters (ed. W. H. C. Propp et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 167-87.

490 This should not be confused with later Rabbinic notions of interpretation. The Rabbis believed themselves to have the full authority to interpret the Torah. The community at Qumran, however, claimed that only a few selected people were given the ability to interpret scripture. See Paul Heger, “Qumran Exegesis: ‘Rewritten Torah’ or Interpretation?,” RevQ 85, no. 22 (2005): 81.

that interpretation is given by divine illumination is pesher.⁴⁹² Therefore, it is hardly surprising that these exegetes were aware of the various biblical and extra-biblical traditions surrounding the idea of Yahweh as the divine planter.

The sectarian community as the “righteous people of God” and therefore the “eternal planting” became a symbol for the group itself and reveal facets of their ideology. After studying the eternal planting motif in the sectarian literature from Qumran literature, Patrick Tiller observed that this metaphor is “significantly narrowed to apply only to the community itself or its immediate predecessors.”⁴⁹³ Their need to justify living out in the desert as protest against the current Temple led them to draw on restoration planting imagery to legitimize their particular worldview.

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<th>Reference</th>
<th>Dead Sea Scrolls</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTLevit ar Bodleian CO. B Vs. 18-22a</td>
<td>For you are a <strong>holy seed</strong>, and holy is your seed <strong>like the sanctuary</strong>, for you are called a holy priest for all the <strong>seed of Abraham</strong>. You are close to God and close to all his holy ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1QS 8: 5-7a</td>
<td>The Community council shall be founded on truth, to be an <strong>everlasting plantation</strong>, a holy house for Israel and the foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron, true witnesses for the judgment and chosen by the will of God <strong>to atone for the land</strong> to render the wicked their retribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1QFestival Prayers Frqas, 1 + 2 (4Q508 1)</td>
<td>For you console us from our distress, and you gather together the exiles for the time and our scattered ones you assemble for the age of your mercies upon the assembly, <strong>like drops upon the earth in seed time</strong>, <strong>like rain upon the plants in the time of grass</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1QHa 14:15</td>
<td>Their <strong>root will sprout like a flower of the field forever</strong>, to <strong>make a shoot grow</strong> in branches of the <strong>everlasting plantation</strong> so that it covers all the world with its shade, and its <strong>crown</strong> reaches up to the skies, and its <strong>roots</strong> down to the abyss. All the <strong>streams of Eden will water its branches</strong> and they will be seas without limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1QHa 16</td>
<td>I give thanks to You, O YHWH, for <strong>You set me</strong> by a fountain which flows in a dry land, a spring of water in a desolate land, a well watered garden. You <strong>planted</strong> a stand of uniper and pine together with cypress for Your glory; trees of life at the secret spring, hidden among all the trees by the water so that a <strong>shoot</strong> might grow up into an <strong>eternal planting</strong>...The <strong>shoot of holiness</strong> grows up into a <strong>planting of truth</strong>, hidden and not</td>
</tr>
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⁴⁹² According to *pesher*, there is a mystery communicated by God to the prophet, but the communication remains sealed until its *pesher* is made known by God to his chosen interpreter. See Frederick F. Bruce, *Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: Tyndale Press, 1959), 8.

And because it is not known its secret is sealed up. (vacat) But You, O God, You protect its fruit with the mystery of powerful warriors, holy spirits, etc. But You, O my God, have placed Your words in my mouth, as showers of early rain, for all who thirst and as a spring of living waters.

4Q201
(4QEnoch ar)
Col. V: 1
Enoch 10:3-4

And from him a plant will be planted and all generations of the world will be founded.

4Q204 col. V:7
Then all the earth will be tilled in justice and it will all be planted with trees and filled with blessing. All the trees of the earth which they wish for will be planted in it and in it they will plant vines and each vine which will be planted in it will yield a thousand amphoras of wine and each seed in it will yield a thousand seahs for every seah.

4Q212 Col.
IV:12
The chosen ones will be chosen as witnesses to justice form the plant of everlasting justice; sevenfold wisdom and knowledge shall be given to them. They shall uproot the foundations of Violence and the work of deceit in it in order to carry out judgment.

4Q221
4QJub. 7
He will bless you in all your works, and will raise from you a plant of truth in the earth for all the generations of the earth. And he not bring an end to my name and your name from beneath the sky for all the days.

4Q266
And at the period of wrath, he visited them and caused to sprout from Israel and from Aaron a shoot of the planting, in order to possess his land and to become fat with the good things of the soil.

4Q266 frag.
1:3
My God Most High bless you, may he show you his face, and may he open for you his good treasure which is in the heavens, to cause to fall down showers of blessing, dew and rain, early and late rains in their season, and to give you fruit, the harvests of wheat, of wine and of oil in plenty. And for you the land will yield delicious fruits. And you shall eat them and be replete. In your land there will be no miscarriage nor will one be sick; drought and blight will not be seen in its harvest.

4Q392
4QCommunal
Confession
Frag. 3:6b
You are YHWH, you have chosen our fathers long ago. May you raise us up to be their remnant, to give us what you established with Abraham, with Israel, and to drive out warriors of strength, and mighty in power, to give us houses full of all good things, well, of water, vineyards and olive trees from the inheritance of the people.

4Q415
4QInstruction
Frag. 1 Col
II:2
For when he walks perfectly in all your instructions. Then eternal, and your holy seed will not or not shall your seed be removed from the holy inheritance of…and you will rejoice in your children.

4Q433a
4QHodayot-like
Frag. 2
For the instructor for the glory of a delightful plantation he has planted in his garden and in his vineyard, his garden-beds and its branches will bear fruit and multiply its sprouts with support up to the heights of heaven, and branches for eternal generations, and to produce foliage and its leaves and its shoots will be in it, without brambles and thistles its roots will not be pulled up from his bed of spices…

4Q475
4QRenewed
Earth
And there will be no more guilty deeds on the earth and not…destroyer, and every adversary; and all the world will be like Eden, and all…the earth will be at peace forever.

4Q500 Frag.
1:1-7
May your mulberry trees blossom and….your winepress, built of stone…at the gate of the holy height…your plantation and your glorious channels…your delicious branches…

Table J\textsuperscript{494}

\textsuperscript{494} Translation taken from Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, \textit{The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
The planting imagery in the sectarian literature at Qumran parallels the Pseudepigrapha literature in vocabulary and content. This imagery is particularly similar to the writings of Jubilees. For example, many of the phrases are identical: a righteous plant, a holy seed, eternal generations, seed of Abraham, imagery of dew and rain, etc. Fragmentary copies of fourteen manuscripts of Jubilees were found at Qumran. Jubilees displays an interest in the last times, at time in which God will restore those who repent and place them in a new creation. The planting imagery in both Jubilees and the Dead Sea Scroll’s corpus reveal a futuristic utopia-like garden where the righteous and just dwell. 4Q475 also envisions an eschatological age when the whole world is like Eden Garden, free of sin and filled with peace.

The community, envisioned as a righteous plant, is depicted as close to God and a holy house. 1QS 18:5 may indicate that the group believed that as a divine planting, they represented the temple itself.

References to the Song of the Sea and the Song of the Vineyard within the Scrolls

There are two texts within the Qumran literature that illustrate imagery similar with the Song of the Vineyard: 4Q204 and 4Q500. 4Q204 describes an idyllic vineyard that produces exponential amounts of wine. This vineyard is ‘tilled in justice’ which allows for it to produce much more wine than should be expected. The vineyard depicted here is also reminiscent of Isaiah 27:2-6 since the vineyard is producing wine rather than sour grapes.

4Q500 is a blessing text that is also dealing with a vineyard. The text is fragmentary, but there are references to a wine-press, a delightful plant, and a holy
height. Joseph Baumgarten argues based on rabbinic exegesis that the holy height may refer to the temple, since the temple mount itself became associated with the site of the ‘righteous planting’ in some literature of the Second Temple period. He asserts that, “this fragment is a small but significant link in the continuity of the chain of biblical, apocryphal and aggadic traditions surrounding the Lord’s vineyard which contained the Temple and recalled the fruitfulness of his primeval garden.” The Song of the Vineyard was already a source of interpretive conversation within the biblical writings, so its continued analysis highlights its importance in later traditions as well.

The Song of the Sea is another “highly charged” text that reveals a significant link of continuity between biblical and later Second Temple literature. There are two texts at Qumran that either allude to or draw on Exodus 15. For example, 1QS 11:7b-9a does not show direct verbal connections, but several motifs from the Song of the Sea are present. According to Paul Swarup, “the motif of being the Lord’s planting represented by מֻסְמָרֶה נִנָּה is expressed by יִנָּה לַאֲדוֹתָהּ נָהָה in line 8, נַחֲלָה in line 7 correspond to מְכַרֵּשׁ and מִשְׂמָרֶה in line 8 is parallel to מִשָּׁנֶה נָהָה, by which they identified themselves as the Lord’s sanctuary.” Other sectarian texts, such as the Hodayot and the Damascus Document, also refer to the community as a place of “eternal planting.” At times this phrase refers to the specific

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495 For instance, Tosefta Sukka 3,15 reads: “And he built a tower in its midst, this refers to the Hekhal; He dug a winepress in it, this refers to the altar; and he dug a winepress in it, this refers to the channel.”


497 For a chart showing this relationship, see Paul Swarup, The Self-Understanding of the Dead Sea Scrolls Community: An Eternal Planting: A House of Holiness (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 71.
Qumran sect, but there are also some instances that this metaphor adopts an eschatological tone.

A classic example of how the Song of the Sea exemplifies a long tradition of interpretation comes from 4QFlor 3:1-13. The column begins with a quotation of 2 Sam 7:10, which is then interpreted through the secondary use of Exod 15:17-18. G. J. Brooke argues that this composition is, “concerned with the way various unfulfilled blessings and prophecies are being and will be fulfilled in the experiences of the community. Exodus 15:17 and 2 Sam 7:10 are joined through their common use of ‘to plant.’”498 For the Qumran exegetes, the word “plant” formed a basis of association that they could then use to interpret events in their current context. Since they frequently depicted themselves as YHWH’s ‘true planting,’ references to Exod 15:17 and 2 Sam 7:10 are to be expected.

The sectarian literature from Qumran highlights an ongoing tradition of religious poetry composition as well as a strikingly sophisticated hermeneutical practice. In their quest to formulate and express an ideology, the scrolls offer a glimpse into some of the social and religious concerns in the late Second Temple period. Their worldview is complex and is still being unraveled, but it is possible to formulate at least one snapshot of this worldview by looking at the metaphorical expressions they chose to emphasize.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1 Summary and Conclusions

The present study has argued that metaphor represents a dominant mode of biblical thought, particularly concerning the depiction of the divine/human relationship. Recent advances in conceptual metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics transformed the function of metaphor within literature and everyday speech. Metaphor began to be investigated for its cognitive capabilities, freeing the trope from a purely linguistic analysis. This has been especially helpful in analyzing ancient societies and their conceptual framework because metaphorical discourse illuminates the relationship between language, culture and cognition.

In the Hebrew Bible, metaphor is the primary method used for depicting the innate characteristics of YHWH. This is especially apparent in the early poetry. Since ancient Israel was an agrarian society, the deep connection to the land is also reflected in the choice of metaphorical expression. Metaphors drawn from the natural world highlight the presence of the divine within the ecological environment of ancient Israel. Even those few instances where the text depicts God communicating with people directly, the natural world is an active agent in the revelation. For example, theophoric elements emerge in storms, loud thunder, violent earthquakes, and a gentle breeze.

Metaphors drawn from the natural world were also instrumental in depicting the development of ancient Israelite conception of divine favor versus divine wrath. The
conceptual metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE chronicles the, often tumultuous relationship between the divine and the people.

Using insights from comparative ancient Near Eastern evidence, this study analyzed the social context of the divine as planter. YHWH’s association as a warrior/storm-god is reminiscent of third millennium storm-god imagery in Mesopotamia, which coincided with the spread of agriculture. Five early Hebrew poems: Psalm 29, Judges 5, Deuternomy 32, Habakkuk 3, and Exodus 15 illustrated that metaphor and mythical language depicting the divine was common in early biblical literature. In each poem, YHWH is depicted as a warrior/storm-god in imagery comparable, but not identical to the Canaanite storm-god, Baal. Exodus 15:17 was highlighted as the core text for this study, since this is where the metaphor of YHWH as the planter of the people first appears in the biblical literature. Sumerian, Persian, and Ugaritic texts which feature the authochthonous origin of man were also discussed in order to demonstrate that the gods “planting” people was not particular to ancient Israel. Even thought the creation account in Genesis 2-3 depicts the first humans as the blend of a divine template and dirt from the earth, the nation of Israel is described metaphorically as a planting of YHWH. Thus, the Song of the Sea mimics the cosmogonic activities of the creation of the world, but at a national rather than a cosmic level.

Based on the iconographic and epigraphic evidence, the metaphor of the divine as planter should be considered a primary metaphor in ancient Near Eastern culture. The metaphorical mapping of the divine as vintner of the people, however, expresses a complex and highly localized discourse. Wine production requires a certain climate and topography. Israel’s favorable location welcomed viticulture and was a known feature of
the area from the early Iron Age. Complex metaphors are important to cultural consideration because they testify to a culturally specific discussion. Beer was the drink of choice in the ancient Near East, yet the biblical literature largely ignores this fermented drink. Wine, on the other hand, is mentioned almost three hundred times. The archaeological picture of the late Iron Age in Israel and Judah also supports the conclusion that viticulture was a mainstay of the economy.

The analysis of the Gezer Calendar Inscription, the Samaria ostraca, as well as the survey of hundreds of *lmq* jar handles and simple treading installations also illustrate that viticulture was important part of the material culture in the Iron Age Israel. The eighth century prophetic texts echo these findings. The oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem, Amos, Hosea, and Micah are latent with viticulture imagery, in particular the association of wine production with the deteriorating morality in the land. The Song of the Vineyard provides the most complete metaphorical discourse on the association with YHWH as a vintner and the people as the vine(yard) in the literature. The people are portrayed as a choice planting in this text, tended by a careful vintner. The fruit of this vine, however, produced sour and worthless grapes unfit for wine production. YHWH is described as the disappointed vintner in this song and he vows to not only withhold the rain from the vines, but to destroy the vineyard itself. This song illuminates the social grievances of the eighth century, namely the latifundialization of the land of local peasants by wealthy landowners. YHWH is an angry vintner in these texts and he is often likened to a grape treader, “treading” the people in his fury. Since viticulture was linked to social, economic and cultic spheres, this metaphor spoke to all levels of society.
The destruction of the majority of key settlements in Judah by the Babylonian army crippled the agriculture sector as well. Wine production centers such as Eshkol
and the terraced hills surrounding Jerusalem were burned to the ground. Although some scholars have argued that rural areas maintained a level of continuity, the archaeological picture paints a different picture. The area of Benjamin may have been an administrative center in the early sixth century, but many of the settlements in this area gradually declined due to the economic and political stability in the region. Wine production is attested at Gibeon and some small farmsteads, but wine trade would have been minimal without the port of Ashkelon. Interestingly, the metaphor of people as vines drastically decreases in biblical literature at this time period as well. Since metaphor variation is expected when there is a change in geography, landscape, or dwelling, this is hardly surprising. The “remnant” of people who return from exile are still depicted in horticulture imagery, but instead of vines, they are plants “replanted” in a divine garden. The emergence of proto-apocalyptic motifs, capitalize on early combat warrior and storm-god imagery from mythic material such as the Song of the Sea. Isaiah 27 and Isaiah 51 were analyzed as examples of the sythnesis of Israel’s mythological past while simultaneously laying the groundwork for the apocalyptic features of future writings. In this way, the plant metaphor contined to be utilized in biblical literature as a depiction of YHWH’s chosen people, planted on the mount of his inheritance.

In many ancient Near Eastern mythologies, metaphor was an intentional method of interpretation. These metaphors were chosen from experiences in everyday life, such as the natural landscape, the ecological environment, and warfare. The metaphor of YHWH as the planter of the people is rooted in a similar cultural milieu. Planting
imagery remains a consistent portrayal of the Israelite people in the Hebrew Bible, although the association of the people with the vineyard is typically portrayed unfavorably in pre-exilic texts. The natural world was the conceptual model from which the metaphors for the divine/human relationship were gleaned. From these roots, the many-sided crystal by which the divine is depicted emerges in vibrant color.

8.2 Directions for Future Research

The development of ancient Israelite religion was complex and entailed mythical as well as historical components. The preoccupation with the “historical” aspects of the religion has highlighted defining moments, but has failed to recognize the importance of the natural world within its original social context. Any attempt to disassociate the natural world from the biblical literature contradicts the agrarian fabric that regulated ancient thought and behavior. We live in a world increasingly removed from food production, yet ecological concerns are prevalent today as well. Land care is an important theme in biblical literature and ultimately became a representation of the people themselves.

As the excursuses have shown, the planting metaphor is apparent in Second Temple literature as well. The Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls attest to a highly sophisticated understanding of this metaphorical mapping, which was utilized for specific ideological purposes. This study did not analyze the Apocrypha and New Testament references to divine planting imagery, but there is much to be learned from these traditions as well. For instance, Jesus is referred to as “the true vine” in John 14:1, replacing Israel as the vineyard. Furthermore, the Mishnah and Talmud contain
information about horticulture as well as biblical interpretation on the significant
class of this study. Planting imagery remained a popular subject of
discourse in biblical thought even after the canon took its final shape. The roots of divine
planting imagery in the biblical text can possibly be attributed to a common cultural
matrix, yet the particular variations within biblical and later Jewish and Christian
literatures, reveal snapshots of thought at various points in history.

I hope this study can stimulate further investigation into the conceptual world of
the ancient Near East. Metaphor can be a useful tool for analyzing culturally specific
ideologies and concerns. The memory of foundational events as well as cultural
particularities, are ingrained into the language. Metaphor theory, coupled with
comparative textual analysis and the survey of material culture, can all work in tandem to
advance our understanding of the complexities of ancient thought.
### Appendix 1: Hebrew Bible References to Divine as Planter/People as Plants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Pre-Exilic/Exilic References in the Hebrew Bible</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exod 15:17a</td>
<td>You brought them in and <strong>planted</strong> them on the mountain of your own possession.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numb 24:5-7a</td>
<td>How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like <strong>palm-groves</strong> that stretch far away, like <strong>gardens</strong> beside a river, like aloes that YHWH has <strong>planted</strong>, like <strong>cedar trees</strong> beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his <strong>seed</strong> shall have abundant water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deut 29:28</td>
<td>YHWH uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is now the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 7:10</td>
<td>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and <strong>will plant</strong> them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 5:1b-7a</td>
<td>My beloved had a <strong>vineyard</strong> on a very <strong>fertile</strong> hill. He <strong>dug it</strong>, <strong>cleared it of stones</strong>, and <strong>planted</strong> it with <strong>choice vines</strong>; he built a <strong>watchtower</strong> in the midst of it, and <strong>hewed out</strong> a <strong>wine vat</strong> in it; he expected it to yield <strong>grapes</strong>, but it yielded <strong>sour grapes</strong>…I will make it a waste; it shall not <strong>be pruned</strong> or <strong>hoed</strong>, and it shall <strong>be overgrown</strong> with <strong>briers</strong> and <strong>thorns</strong>; I will also command the clouds that they rain <strong>no rain</strong> upon it. For the <strong>vineyard</strong> of YHWH <strong>hosts</strong> is the <strong>house of Israel</strong>, and the <strong>people of Judah</strong> are his <strong>pleasant planting</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 5:24</td>
<td>Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the <strong>stubble</strong> and as <strong>dry grass</strong> sinks down in the flame, so their <strong>root will become rotten</strong>, and their <strong>blossom</strong> go up like <strong>dust</strong>; for they have rejected the instruction of YHWH of hosts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 25:6-7</td>
<td>On this mountain the YHWH of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a <strong>feast of well-aged wines</strong>, of rich food with marrow, of <strong>well-aged wines strained clear</strong>. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 27:1-3, 6</td>
<td>On that day YHWH with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea. On that day: A <strong>pleasant vineyard</strong>, sing about it! I, YHWH, am its <strong>keeper</strong>; every moment I water it. I guard it night and day so that no one can harm it. In days to come Jacob shall <strong>take root</strong>, Israel shall <strong>blossom</strong> and <strong>put forth shoots</strong>, and fill the whole world with <strong>fruit</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 37:31-32</td>
<td>The surviving <strong>remnant</strong> of the house of Judah shall again <strong>take root</strong> downward and <strong>bear fruit</strong> upward; for from Jerusalem a <strong>remnant</strong> shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 51:3</td>
<td>For YHWH will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the <strong>garden of YHWH</strong>, joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of son.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 58:11</td>
<td>YHWH will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a <strong>watered garden</strong>, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 60:20-21</td>
<td>Your sun shall no more go down, or your moon withdraw itself; for YHWH will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever. They are the <strong>shoot that I planted</strong>, the work of my hands, so that I might be glorified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 61:3</td>
<td>To provide for those who mourn in Zion-to give them a garland instead of ashes…They will be called <strong>oaks of righteousness, the planting of YHWH</strong>, to display his glory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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499 The references are listed according to the Hebrew Bible organization. Also, the references listed here are those where the nation of Israel is metaphorically depicted as a plant/vine or YHWH is associated with planting or viticulture. I do not include all the generic references to people as “plants.” For instance, in the Psalter the righteous are often compared to a plant (e.g. Pss 1:3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jer 12:2</td>
<td></td>
<td>You <strong>plant</strong> them, and they <strong>take root</strong>; they <strong>grow</strong> and <strong>bring forth fruit</strong>; you are near in their mouths yet far from their hearts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 12:10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Many shepherds have destroyed <strong>my vineyard</strong>, they have trampled down my portion, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 12:14-15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thus says YHWH concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage that I have given my people Israel to inherit: I am about <strong>to pluck them up</strong> from their land, and I <strong>will pluck up</strong> the house of Judah from among them. And after I <strong>have plucked them up</strong>, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again to their heritage and to their land, every one of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 17:7-8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Blessed are those who trust in YHWH, whose trust is YHWH. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear <strong>fruit</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 24:5-7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thus says YHWH, the God of Israel: Like these good <strong>figs</strong>, so I will regard the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I <strong>will plant</strong> them, and <strong>not pluck</strong> them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am YHWH; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 31:27-28</td>
<td></td>
<td>The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I <strong>will sow</strong> the house of Israel and house of Judah with <strong>seed</strong> of humans and the <strong>seed</strong> of animals. And just as I have watched over them <strong>to pluck up</strong> and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them <strong>to build</strong> and <strong>to plant</strong>, says YHWH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 32:40-41</td>
<td></td>
<td>I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will <strong>plant</strong> them in <strong>this land</strong> in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 42:10</td>
<td></td>
<td>If you will only remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will <strong>plant</strong> you, and <strong>not pluck</strong> you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I have brought upon you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 45:4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thus says YHWH: I am going to break down what I have built, and <strong>pluck up</strong> what I <strong>have planted</strong>—that is, the <strong>whole land</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 15:6-8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thus says the Lord God: Like the wood of the <strong>vine</strong> among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will guive up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will set my face against them; although they escape from the fire, the fire shall still consume them; and you shall know that I am YHWH, when I set my face against them. And I will make the <strong>land desolate</strong>, because they have acted faithlessly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Ezek 17:22-23a | | Your mother was like a **vine in a vineyard** transplanted by the water, fruitful and full of branches from abundant water. |}
<p>| Ezek 36:8-9 | | But you, O mountains of Israel, <strong>shall shoot</strong> out your <strong>branches</strong>, and yield your <strong>fruit</strong> to my people Israel; for they shall soon come home. See now, I am for you; I will turn to you, and you <strong>shall be tilled</strong> and <strong>sown</strong>. |
| Ezek 36:35-36 | | And they will say, “This land that was desolate has become like the <strong>garden of Eden</strong>; and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified.” Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, YHWH, have rebuilt the ruined places, and <strong>replanted</strong> that which was <strong>desolate</strong>; I, YHWH, have spoken, and I will do it. |
| Hos 10:1-2 | | Israel is a luxuriant <strong>vine</strong> that yields its <strong>fruit</strong>… Their heart is false, now they must bear their guilt. YHWH will break down their altars, and destroy their pillars. |
| Hos 14:5-7 | | I will be like the <strong>dew</strong> to Israel; he <strong>shall blossom</strong> like the lily, he <strong>shall strike roots</strong> like the forests of Lebanon. His <strong>shoots</strong> shall spread out; they shall flourish as a <strong>garden</strong>; they <strong>shall blossom</strong> like the <strong>vine</strong>, their memory shall be like the <strong>wine</strong> of Lebanon. |
| Amos 9:15 | | <strong>I will plant</strong> them upon their land, and they shall never again <strong>be plucked up</strong> out of the |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Passage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micah 7:1-2</td>
<td>Woe is me! For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the <strong>vintage</strong> has been gleaned, finds no <strong>cluster</strong> to eat; there is not first-ripe fig for which I hunger. The faithful have disappeared from the land, and there is no one left who is upright; they all lie in wait for blood, and they hunt each other with nets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pss 44:1-2</td>
<td>We have heard with our own ears, O God, our ancestors have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old: you with your own hand drove out the nations, but them you <strong>planted</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pss 80:7</td>
<td>We have heard with our own ears, O God, our ancestors have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old: you with your own hand drove out the nations and <strong>planted</strong> it. You <strong>cleared the ground</strong> for it; it <strong>took root</strong> and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches; it sent out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the River. Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way <strong>pluck its fruit</strong>? Turn again, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this <strong>vine</strong>, the <strong>stock</strong> that your right hand <strong>planted</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lam 1:15</td>
<td>YHWH has rejected all the warriors in the midst of me; he proclaimed a time against me to crush my young men; YHWH has trodden as in a wine press the virgin daughter Judah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Chron 17:9a</td>
<td>I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and <strong>will plant</strong> them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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